



CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSIONAL PET DOG TRAINERS

A PUPPY OWNER'S GUIDE TO MOUTHING and CHEWING

Countless dogs are euthanized annually because they bite. Teaching bite inhibition is **so** simple and every puppy owner's responsibility. This keeps your dog *safe*.

Puppies nip and chew on each other all the time. Nipping and chewing are nature's way of teaching bite inhibition and control. When one pup bites too hard, the other pup will yelp and refuse to play for a short time. This teaches the hard-biter to back off and be gentler if play is to continue. When play does continue, the offending puppy tends to be a wee bit more calm and relaxed. Puppies are removed from their "teachers" before these lessons are ingrained. However, the same technique can be used by humans to teach puppies that human skin is too delicate to be touched by doggy mouths.

- 1) Believe it or not, we want puppies to mouth so that they learn to do so very gently. A dog that has learned to inhibit his bite will show more control in later life. All dogs bite. They bite other dogs, they bite food, they bite toys and, sometimes, they bite people. A dog who has been taught bite inhibition will know how to bite gently and, in an emergency, will be less likely to do damage. A dog without this training will bit *hard*.
- 2) When puppies make contact with your skin or clothing, say "Ouch", like it really hurt. If you have a real turbo pup, the best thing to do and say is, "Ouch, that hurt!" and remove yourself from the puppy's vicinity. You can shut a door between you or pop the puppy in his crate for a time out. Come back in a couple of seconds to make up. I know this sounds silly, but I do mean a couple of seconds. Puppy attention spans are very short; we want to make sure that the puppy is still thinking about playing with you. Get the puppy to sit, bring a toy to chew on, give the puppy another focus for energy. If hard mouthing continues, remove your presence for longer. When puppy teeth touch your skin, repeat "Ouch!" Eventually puppy will realize that human skin is just way to delicate and off-limits. Hitting, spanking, restraining and pushing all tend to make puppies more excited. Removing the stimulation calms him down and makes him think.
- 3) Puppies *need* to chew. Make sure there are plenty of appropriate chew toys. Exchange your arm for a rope toy. Mix it up a bit; throw a ball, dangle a stick and make sure you have a toy handy when you are going to be playing with your puppy. Use a product like "Bitter Apple" to discourage chewing on everything else.
- 4) "Leave it." This very useful command means, "Get your mouth off whatever it happens to be on." It is extremely exhausting, not to say useless, to chase a six month old puppy all over the house or park trying to retrieve the mitt, hat, purse, sock, or whatever that is dangling from his mouth. Make giving things up a rewarding experience. Trade for toys or treats on compliance. Say "Leave it" and offer a tidbit in exchange for the laundry.
- 5) Put your hands in the puppy's mouth, examine teeth, run your hand around his muzzle. Get that puppy used to having human hands on every part of his body. Do this when the puppy is calm and relaxed and make your movements calm and relaxing.