

The Puppy Biting Survival Guide



Fear-Free Tips for Raising a Tiny Shark 🦈🐶

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A Pet Parent's Guide to Puppy Biting

Puppy biting is a normal part of growing up—your pup is learning about the world with their mouth, just like a toddler uses their hands. With calm, consistent guidance, you can teach bite inhibition and help your puppy choose appropriate ways to play and chew. You're not doing anything wrong; this phase is common and it does get better.



Why Puppies Bite

- They bite to soothe teething discomfort and to explore new textures, smells, and objects.
- They mouth during play to practice social skills and learn how hard is “too hard.”
- They may nip to get attention or because they're feeling extra excited.
- They often bite more when they're overstimulated, frustrated, or overtired.

Did You Know?

Puppies have 28 baby teeth, and many start teething around 3–4 months as adult teeth come in. Most pups finish teething by about 6 months, though chewing can stay intense for a while as they build new habits.

Overtired Puppies Bite More

One of the most overlooked parts of puppy development is sleep – and how much puppies actually need.

Many young puppies need 18–20 hours of sleep per day. While sleeping through the night is important, all of those daytime naps add up too.

Just like overtired toddlers can become emotional, impulsive, and difficult to settle, overtired puppies often become:

- extra mouthy
- bitey
- zoomy
- frustrated
- unable to settle themselves

Puppies who are constantly stimulated or not getting enough uninterrupted rest may struggle more with biting and overarousal.

Rest is an important part of both physical and emotional development.

General Puppy Sleep Needs

- 10–12 weeks: 18–20 hours/day
- 14–16 weeks: ~18 hours/day
- 16–18 weeks: 16–18 hours/day
- Older puppies and adult dogs: 12–14 hours/day

How to Stop Puppy Biting

1. Redirect to appropriate chew toys. Keep a toy within reach and calmly swap it in the moment teeth touch skin.
2. Use positive reinforcement when they're gentle. Praise, treat, or continue play when your puppy mouths softly or chooses a toy.
3. Stop play immediately when biting occurs. Freeze, remove attention for 10–20 seconds, then restart only when your pup is calm.
4. Teach the "gentle" cue. Reward soft mouthing and pause the game if pressure increases, so your puppy learns the difference.
5. Provide plenty of exercise and mental stimulation. Short training sessions, sniff walks, and food puzzles help reduce “busy mouth” behavior.
6. Be consistent with all family members. Agree on the same rules and responses so your puppy doesn't get mixed messages.



What NOT to Do

- Don't use physical punishment – it can increase fear and make biting worse.
- Avoid rough play (like wrestling with hands) because it teaches your puppy that skin is a toy.
- Don't pull away quickly, since sudden movement can trigger chasing and nipping.
- Don't yell or get angry; it can overstimulate your puppy and accidentally reward the behavior with attention.

When to Seek Professional Help

Consider working with a certified trainer or behavior professional if biting is frequent and intense, breaks skin, or seems driven by fear or guarding. Get help sooner if your puppy stiffens, growls, snaps, or bites when handled, approached near food/toys, or woken up. A professional can assess what's triggering the behavior and give you a step-by-step plan tailored to your home. If you're ever unsure about safety, it's okay to ask for support right away.

Remember

Biting is a normal puppy stage, and your calm consistency is what helps it fade. Celebrate small wins, keep sessions short, and make it easy for your puppy to succeed with plenty of toys and rest. With time and practice, gentle play becomes the new habit.