



Nipping and Rough Play

It's normal for puppies to play with their mouths. While this behavior is rarely aggressive, it can be difficult to stop it unless you give your puppy an alternative behavior. The goal is to redirect your puppy's desire to play with their mouth to a chew toy and teach them that putting teeth on skin is not acceptable.

Encourage Acceptable Behavior

Redirect your puppy's chewing towards acceptable toys whenever your pup tries to put their mouth on skin or other unacceptable objects. This can be very effective for children who want to play with the puppy but not get nipped. When you or your child reach out to pet your puppy, offer them a toy or bone with the other hand. Alternate which hand has the chew object and which does the petting. At first, you may only be able to pet your puppy for short periods of time since the longer they are being pet, the more excited they may become and try to nip.

Discourage Unacceptable Behavior

You must teach your puppy that putting their mouth on skin is unacceptable. Teach your puppy that nipping "turns off" all attention from you. As soon as you feel teeth on skin, yell "Ouch!" in a high-pitched voice, then ignore your puppy for a few seconds. If the nipping continues, leave the room. You may need to have your puppy tethered so when you leave, they can't follow you. After 10-15 seconds, return and try the chew toy and petting method again. It will take repetitions for your puppy to understand.

You can also try wearing cotton gloves that have an unpleasant tasting substance, such as bitter apple. Your puppy will learn that hands taste bad. However, for this to work, your puppy must experience the bad taste every time they nip your hand. Puppies may learn that hands with gloves taste bad, but hands without gloves don't.

Note: Never leave your puppy unattended when tethered since they can get tangled and injured. When leaving the room, stand a good distance away where you can see your puppy, but they can't see you.

Children and Puppies

It's difficult for children under 8 or 9 to not push a puppy away when the nip or jump up. However, your puppy will think they are playing and try to do it more. Puppies shouldn't be left alone with children under 10 years old and parents should monitor interactions between young children and puppies.