



Dog Behaviour Guide

Puppy Mouthing



When puppies play with each other, they use their mouths. Therefore, they may also be inclined to grab or bite your hand with their mouth during play or when being petted. The goal is to redirect your puppy's motivation onto acceptable chew toys. Here are some recommendations for redirecting your puppy's mouthing.

Encourage Acceptable Behavior

It's essential that we teach our puppy to have good bite inhibition for safety purposes. Redirect your puppy's motivation to nip or bite by offering more acceptable objects (such as toys) when you pet them. As you reach out to pet your puppy, offer the toy with your other hand. This strategy will keep your puppy busy while they are being petted. You may need to start off by petting or scratching your puppy for short periods of time. Prolonged petting will increase your puppy's arousal, leading to a play nip or bite.

Provide your puppy with plenty of appropriate pet-safe chew toys in the home. Try offering different enrichments as well, such as snuffle or lick mats, food puzzles, or a frozen KONG[®] toy filled with nut butter. Offering your puppy plenty of chew toys and enrichments will help decrease your puppy's interest in inappropriate items, such as furniture or you.

Discourage Unacceptable Behavior

Teach your puppy that nipping results in the end of attention or social interaction. If your puppy nips you, end the interaction and walk away. Then ignore your puppy for a few minutes, until they have calmed down. Then resume social interaction with a toy for redirection.

Jumping Up

Jumping on people is an attention-seeking or excitable behaviour. If your puppy jumps up on you, here are some steps you can use to ignore unwanted behaviour and reward desired behaviour:

- Fold your arms in front of you and turn away from your puppy.
- Continue to turn away from your puppy until all four paws are on the ground, then quietly praise your puppy and reward with a treat. If your puppy knows the "sit" command, ask for a "sit" when all four paws are on the ground, then quietly praise your puppy and reward if they remain sitting.
- If your puppy begins to jump while you're praising them, simply turn away and repeat Step 2. Remember to keep your praise low key.
- When your puppy realizes that jumping = no attention, and no jumping = attention, they will eventually stop jumping up on you. Remember, once you've taught your puppy to sit quietly for attention, you must reward their behavior.

What to AVOID

Punishing your puppy for nipping or jumping up. Several issues can arise from punishment, depending on your puppy's temperament and the severity of punishment, some of which can include:

- Hand shyness, where they cringe or cower when someone extends their hand.
- Fearfulness and refusal to approach you or respond to recall cues.
- Defensive responses, including aggression warning signs and/or attempts to bite.
- Increased arousal and excitability, escalating to a nip or bite.

Be Consistent

It's important that your puppy's behaviours are managed consistently by all family members. Show your puppy how to appropriately interact with you (and others) by rewarding desired behaviour and ignoring unwanted behaviour.

Children and Puppies

It's difficult for young children to practice behavior modification effectively. Children's first reaction to being nipped or mouthed by a puppy might be to push the puppy away with their hands and/or arms. This can be interpreted as play behaviour, furthering the puppy's excitement and likelihood to nip. Adults should closely monitor all interactions between their children and dogs.

Additional Resources:

The Training Academy at the Edmonton Humane Society offers training classes, including Puppy Basics! This course helps puppies learn proper interactions, bit inhibition, become well-socialized, and covers basic commands. For more information, visit our website:

<https://www.edmontonhumanesociety.com/sessions/puppy-basics/>

Did You Know?

You can also ask us behaviour questions by emailing:

askthespecialist@edmontonhumanesociety.com

It takes approximately \$7 million to keep the Edmonton Humane Society operational for one year and 40% of these funds come from generous donations made by supporters like you. Please [Donate](#).