



Help! My puppy won't stop 'biting' me

I think one of the biggest shocks to a new owner's system is the amount of biting puppies do. We know it's going to happen; we even know it will hurt, but sometimes we wonder what on earth is going on as this little land shark seems to be intent on chasing us and sinking their teeth in at every opportunity.

It won't make it hurt any less but it may be a comfort to hear that it is perfectly natural. Like babies' puppies examine everything with their mouths, the difference is they have razor sharp teeth! If a puppy gets a reaction they like when they bite something they are likely to do it again – if we make the thing they are biting a toy rather than us everybody wins.

Here are some ideas / things to think about if they are getting bitey:

- As a general rule try and put yourselves in their paws and ask yourself what are they getting out of x,y,z behaviour, for example if they are bitey are they trying to tell you that they are hungry / tired / wanting to play.
- Long toys are good, your puppy at one end and you at the other, if they start 'creeping' up the toy you can switch ends.
- Having a toy ready to play if it's play time, swapping our hands for toys can, and does work but we don't want our puppy to learn that in order to get us to play they needs to chomp on our hand first.
- The biting - as much as it can hurt, it is perfectly normal, they are abit like babies and 'test' everything with their mouths. The general rule of thumb is that as soon as teeth touch skin the fun stops. I'm all for fun rough and tumble play but try and make sure it's with toys or that you stop if they start getting over excited and the teeth come out.
- I'd look at getting a baby gate to separate rooms, its alot quicker to step through and close than trying to get through a door. We want our puppy to make the link between teeth and fun stopping.
- The three 'strike' rule is handy - first step is removing whatever they are chowing on, hands etc - behind you back or sit on them, second - stand up and cross your arms with no eye contact, 3rd if they are persistent is leaving the room for a minute or two.
- Have a think about the things you are wearing, so things like shoe laces are often an invitation to nibble :0) - also if you can wear things that prevent your

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puppy hurting you they will get less of a reaction when the sharks teeth land and it loses it fun quite quickly.

- If they gets hold of trouser legs etc try not to pull away, instead gather up the material so that there is less to 'rag around', it will soon become boring.
- Consistency is key – Our puppies will repeat things which have worked before, so if they get a reaction for sinking their teeth in they are likely to try it again.
- A sit is a great distracting behaviour (or a way for your puppy to say 'please') - if they have hold of your clothes etc and has learnt sit we can ask them for a sit, it's hard to hang onto clothes if you are sitting.

Don't worry, it does pass, although it may get a little worse before it gets better when they start teething.