



Puppy play biting / nipping

Puppy biting is a perfectly natural behaviour. Puppies use their mouths to explore their surroundings and to play. Therefore nothing is sacred from your puppy's teeth.

When a bitch feeds her puppies and they are too rough with her (as those little teeth on the bitch's nipples can be quite painful) she will walk away and the feeding stops. This is one of the first lessons a pup learns about biting. The mother will not correct or punish them in a physical way, but by taking away their food supply, they soon learn that if they want to drink longer, they need to be careful with her. They also learn the consequences of using their teeth too hard when playing with their littermates. If they use their teeth too enthusiastically the game will stop. Either their littermate will yell in pain and stop playing with them or they may end up in a fight.

The same principle can be used when a puppy play bites you. To help your puppy to learn to inhibit his bite you need to act like a playmate and simply get up and either put the puppy in his crate or simply put it in a safe time out zone.

A time out place can be compared to the Supernanny's naughty step. It's a place where your puppy can't do any damage to itself or your furniture and can calm down. The ideal place would be a crate. In the time out zone there are no toys or other things to play with or to destroy. When the puppy is calm you can let it out of the time out zone and continue playing.

Very often you can see your puppy gets more and more excited during play. You could try to finish your game before the pup gets into the biting mode. Remember: never to use your hands or body as a toy when playing with your puppy. Instead use a suitable toy.

When your puppy is around 10-12 weeks old he will start teething. It will be very helpful for your pup to have some chews around that he can chew on, as puppies around this age will need to chew on something and if there is no chew for them, they will start on the furniture. Nice chews available are for instance raw hide chews, which you can buy in any pet shop or the supermarket. Remember that chewing should be supervised at all times, so a puppy or adult dog can not choke on his chew.