

Puppy mouthing

Practical steps for gentler interactions

Some days it can feel like you have brought home a little “land shark”. Those sharp teeth hurt. You can love your puppy and still feel exhausted, frustrated or worried about biting. Feeling overwhelmed does not mean you are failing.

Our aim is less biting, gentler play and a puppy who is easier to redirect. Progress is gradual. You should not have to accept being hurt or feeling unsafe.

When biting starts: four calm steps

- 1. Pause.** Stop the interaction. Avoid turning it into a chasing or pulling game. Protect yourself and move away if needed. You do not have to stand there being hurt.
- 2. Offer a suitable toy.** Redirect when it is safe. Offering a toy before biting begins is often easier than interrupting an excited puppy.
- 3. Create space.** If mouthing continues, quietly step behind a gate. Avoid wrestling with or lifting your puppy while they are biting.
- 4. Try a quieter activity.** When your puppy settles, try gentle toy play or another simple activity. If biting starts again straight away, check whether they need a toilet break, quiet rest or a quieter environment.

Keep breaks short and watch how your puppy responds. Check they are comfortable and their needs are met. Do not leave a frightened puppy to panic or use a crate as punishment. If barriers cause distress, ask your trainer for help.

Make tomorrow easier

Prepare: keep suitable toys nearby, use gates or a pen to manage busy moments, and notice when biting usually happens.

Reward calm choices: notice gentle approaches, choosing toys and keeping feet on the floor. Use quiet praise, a small suitable reward or gentle play. Include treats in the daily food allowance.

Balance activity and rest: offer short training, sniffing and play sessions with quiet rest between them. Overtiredness can contribute, but it does not explain every bite. More exercise is not always the answer.

Keep family rules consistent: avoid roughhousing, wrestling and play fighting, particularly while biting is a problem. Do not use hands or clothing as playthings.

Choose chews carefully: supervise toys and chews. Remove damaged items and pieces small enough to swallow. Avoid very hard chews, such as antlers and hard bones, which can break teeth. Ask your vet which options suit your puppy.

Children and puppies

An adult must actively supervise. Use a secure gate when close supervision is not possible. Keep play calm and brief. Avoid chasing, grabbing and hugging. Leave puppies alone when eating, sleeping, enjoying a toy or chew, or resting in their safe space. Children should not take food, toys or chews away. An adult should manage these situations.

If you need a breather

Safely separate yourself from your puppy, check their comfort and needs, and come back when you can respond calmly. Do not smack, pin down, hold the mouth shut or intimidate. Taking a break is sensible. You do not need to manage this alone.

Teeth, progress and support

Normally 28 puppy teeth and 42 adult teeth

Approximate age	What to expect
3-4 weeks	First baby teeth begin to appear.
6-8 weeks	Most puppies have all 28 baby teeth.
3-4 months	Baby teeth start falling out; adult teeth emerge.
4-6 months	A noticeable period of tooth replacement, chewing and possible gum discomfort.
6-7 months	Most dogs have their full set of 42 adult teeth.

Timing varies. Many owners never find the fallen teeth. Chewing can continue at 12 months and beyond, and does not necessarily mean teething pain. The roots of adult teeth continue developing after the teeth come through. Persistent mouth discomfort needs a vet check.

When to contact your vet

Arrange a dental check around five to six months, or as advised by your vet. Contact them sooner for a baby tooth beside its adult replacement, a broken tooth, marked swelling, persistent bleeding, difficulty eating or ongoing pain. Do not pull teeth out yourself.

Seek veterinary advice for sudden changes in biting or discomfort when touching or lifting your puppy. Get individual support for injury, guarding food or objects, or any situation that feels unsafe. Do not punish growling or provoke an incident to film it.

Common questions

The toy is not working. Try earlier, before excitement builds. If your puppy is still grabbing at you, create space instead of repeatedly pushing a toy towards their face.

Should I yelp? Some puppies pause; others become more excited. Pausing calmly and offering a suitable toy are sensible starting points.

Can we play tug? It can suit some puppies, but not every puppy or situation. Keep it gentle, use a toy that keeps hands clear, include pauses and teach a release with a reward or exchange. Stop and choose quieter play if excitement builds, your puppy grabs people or clothing, or finds it hard to stop. Ask your trainer for guidance.

When will it stop? There is no guaranteed age. Look for less biting, gentler pressure and easier redirection. Ask for help if anyone is hurt, progress stalls or you feel overwhelmed.

Support for your puppy and your family

[Puppy Set Up in-home training](#) helps with household routines, toilet training and mouthing. It complements Puppy Preschool. Where available, classes at your usual vet may help build positive familiarity. Ask your vet about vaccination and suitable outings.

[Puppy Preschool](#): \$189 for the full four-week course, one hour weekly. Ages 8-18 weeks, aiming to finish by 18 weeks. First vaccination required. [Enquire about availability](#).

[Natural dog treats](#): choose suitable small training rewards. Chews have a different purpose. Check age guidance, ingredients and dietary needs. We despatch promptly, in most cases on the same business day.

Read the [full mouthing guide](#), [biting guide](#), [teething guide](#) and [bringing a puppy home guide](#).

Based on Australian professional and veterinary guidance, with references in the full guide. General guidance, not veterinary advice or a substitute for an individual assessment. No external endorsement is claimed.