

Biting

Karen Peak

West Wind Dog Training

It is never a good idea to let Puppy play with your hands or feet – no matter how cute it seems. This teaches Puppy it is OK to bite skin. Even though tiny puppies playing tug-of-war with your big finger is cute, it is teaching a very bad habit! Never let a puppy do something once that you do not want him to repeat. It is far easier to prevent bad habits from developing than it is to retrain an older puppy or adult dog. However, this can be used for adult dogs as well.

A good NILIF program can also manage nipping in play and for attention as Nothing In Life Is Free is described earlier in the manual. However, it has to be done consistently and by all who play with the pup or dog. Puppies are very oral – it is how they explore and learn.

First, teach pup that it's mouth has strength and they can control it. Let puppy at first apply a bit of pressure when he puts mouth on you. He needs to learn he has jaw control and how hard is too hard. This is in case puppy forgets manners and accidentally gets his mouth on you he will have learned that humans need gentle. Then he needs to learn that if his mouth gets on you, all play stops and he gets nothing. Puppies are very social creatures and refusing to engage in play can be an effective training technique. As soon as puppy starts to bite or nip, give a loud, yelping "OUCH!!!" Follow with a low, growling "No Bite." Glare at the pup, get up and move away. After a minute or so, get a toy and return to puppy. Encourage the puppy to play with the toy. If he goes for you with a nip, repeat yelping and walking away. If the pup persists in this behavior (nipping), he may need a time out!

If you have yelped and walked away a couple times and pup keeps coming back for more, CALMLY place him in his crate or behind a baby gate where he cannot get to you. NEVER punish as you confine pup, as this will make the confinement area a negative place. Basically, as soon as that next nip comes, tell pup it is time out time and confine him. Puppies and dogs may become nippier as they get tired, over-stimulated, etc and a bit of quiet time and even a nap may help.

Never play games that teach pup it is cute to put his mouth on humans. It is far easier to teach good manners from the beginning than it is to retrain an adult dog that thinks it is good to put his mouth on people in play, for attention, etc., and has for months or years. However, the same concept applies to adult dogs. Again, play nipping and attention nipping can be worked with a good NILIF program as well.

Should your dog continue to bite and not respond or if the biting is accompanied with aggression, growling or anything you do not like, contact a behaviorist. Also, have your dog examined by a vet. There could be an underlying factor for the biting. A dog that is

sore or not feeling well may bite. It is his way of saying something is not right. Also, a poorly socialized or scared dog is more prone to bite, as is a startled one. Teach your children NEVER EVER touch a dog, even one they know, without the owner's permission. Teach them never to handle a stray or loose animal, even if they know it. Children should contact a grown-up instead. Teach children not to tease or hurt dogs. Even the most tolerant dog can be pushed past his limit and retaliate. Even if the children are plainly at fault, it will be the dog that suffers. Prevention is the key.