



Good Habits are Hard to Break

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Bite Inhibition

A soft mouth is the single most important quality for any dog. Hopefully, your dog will never bite or fight, but if he does, well-established bite inhibition ensures that your dog will cause little, if any, damage.

Socialization is an ongoing process of ever-widening experience and confidence building that helps your pup to comfortably handle the challenges and changes of everyday adult life. However, it is impossible to prepare your puppy for every possible eventuality, and on those rare occasions when adult dogs are badly hurt, frightened, scared, or upset, they seldom write letters of complaint. Instead, dogs customarily growl and bite, whereupon the level of bite inhibition training from puppy hood predetermines the seriousness of the damage.

Most adult dogs with poor bite inhibition rarely mouth and seldom bite, but when they do, the bites almost always break the skin and cause damage. Adult dogs with well-established bite inhibition often mouth during play, and should they bite, the bites almost never break the skin because during puppy hood the dog learned how to register a complaint without inflicting any damage, how to inhibit his bite pressure.

Bite inhibition is one of the most misunderstood aspects of behavioral development in dogs (and other animals). Many owners make the catastrophic mistake of stopping their puppy from mouthing altogether right away. A puppy who is not allowed to play-bite, cannot develop reliable bite inhibition. Pups are born virtual biting machines with needle sharp teeth so that they learn biting hurts before they develop the jaw strength to cause appreciable harm. However, they cannot learn to inhibit the force of their bites if they are never allowed to play-bite and play-fight and receive feedback on the pressure of their bites.

Bite inhibition training comprises first teaching the puppy to progressively inhibit the force of his bites until painful puppy play-biting is toned down and transformed into gentle puppy mouthing, and then, and only then, teaching him to progressively inhibit the incidence of his mouthing. Thus the puppy learns that mouthing is by and large inappropriate and that any pressured bite is absolutely unacceptable.

You have until your puppy is 16 weeks old, so take your time to ensure your puppy masters this most important item in his educational curriculum. The more times your puppy bites, the safer his jaws will be as an adult since he has had more opportunities to learn that biting hurts.

If you are worried about your puppy's biting behavior, enroll in a puppy class immediately. You may seek further advice from the trainer, and your puppy may let off steam and direct many of his bites towards other puppies who will give him proper feedback during play sessions. Bite inhibition is of crucial importance, by far the single most important quality of any dog, or any animal. Living with a dog that does not have reliable bite inhibition is unpleasant and dangerous. Bite inhibition must be acquired during puppy hood. You must fully understand how to teach your puppy properly. Attempting to teach bite inhibition to an adolescent or adult dog is often extremely difficult, dangerous, and time-consuming. If you run into problems, consult a professional trainer immediately.