

# **Bite Inhibition**

***The single most important thing you can teach your puppy***

**Bite inhibition means teaching puppy that his teeth can hurt, and that teeth on humans is completely unacceptable.**

The easiest and most reliable way to do this is in a way that your puppy already understands, in fact his brothers and sisters taught him when he was 5 weeks old.

**When he bites you in play, yelp or say ouch, and stop playing for 30 seconds.**

This he understands already, he now just needs to learn that humans are more delicate than his littermates, and he can't bite us as hard. Eventually when he really has the message we then phase out any play mouthing at all.

No need to yell, say no, use physical force, in fact no need to reprimand at all, all you need to do is temporarily withdraw your attention.

**He will learn really quickly that to keep playing he needs to be very careful with his teeth.**

## ***Why do we teach bite inhibition like this?***

Safety      Kindness      Reliability      Ease of understanding

**Understanding** Puppy already knows about not biting too hard from his litter mates, he just doesn't know how hard is too hard for people.

**Safety** Punishing for biting appears to work in some cases, but only if you are bigger and stronger than your dog, which means that it usually **doesn't** work for children as well.

**And when puppy is 40kgs and growls at you will you call his bluff?**

Every one **including children** can employ the ouch method, which helps prevent them from being bitten too.

**Kindness** Punishing your puppy for play biting means hurting your puppy for playing! Not a nice thought is it? It means punishing him for just being a dog, as all puppies play bite with each other, puppies just have less sensitive skin than us. That is the message we need to get through. *They are **our** rules*, he already abides by dog rules and doesn't bite his littermates too hard.

**Reliability** Dogs can bite 8 times per second

Bite inhibition when taught becomes reflex and clicks in in 1/5 of a second. If you tread on your dogs tail accidentally or your child trips and falls on Fido, which dog would you like to have respond to the pain or fright?

Punishment *before we have taught what is acceptable* is unfair to your puppy, And can have some adverse effects on different puppies.

**Bright puppies** can learn who they can get away with biting and who not to bite, eg who is capable of punishing them and who isn't. Young children are not capable of punishing and are therefore at risk from dog bites.

**Excitable/active puppies** can learn that it is a great game, nip in fast then run and play tag and keep away, or I can be faster than you. And lunging at or calling puppy to give him discipline is a sure way of messing up your dogs confidence and keenness to come when called.

**Stronger natured puppies** can become annoyed and defensive at being struck or restrained and can learn to stick up for themselves and hence learn aggression.

**Timid puppies** can end up being very hand shy or completely scared and distrustful of humans altogether.

**Most importantly** telling puppy off can only ever suppress the conscious bite, whereas bite inhibition becomes more instinctive, and continues to work even in frightening or painful situations.

### Some play biting rules for humans

**Never** let puppy mouth or bite articles on your person, eg clothes or shoelaces, as these provide no clues to you on the force of the bite, and therefore no feedback to the puppy that he is biting too hard.

**Yelp** at the time the bite occurs, as this indicates to your puppy that it is the bite that is the reason for your stopping the game. It becomes the marker for what is happening at the time, (the too hard bite).

**Stopping** the play or contact only needs to be for 30 – 60 seconds, just long enough for the puppy to stop and think about what he did.

**After** the time out before you recommence your game, ask your puppy to sit so you can first praise him for having done something right, then play.

**Playing** should be on your terms, you dictate the rules, you start the game and you finish it, this keeps the 'family social order' clear in puppys mind.

**Calming** Keep an eye on the level of puppys excitement, if the level is climbing too high it's a good idea to do some settling exercises, sit and calm and then recommence the game. Easier to prevent problems than try to fix them. Teaches puppy to be careful when he's excited, to pay attention, but most importantly that stopping when asked doesn't automatically end the game.