



## Managing Puppy Biting and Chewing

First things first: a puppy is a dog under five months of age. Once Fido passes five months, he is considered an adolescent and should no longer be “play biting.” Some dogs, however, need help understanding that their mouths don’t belong on human skin...ever!

1. **Make sure plenty of appropriate chew toys are available.** When/if he starts to chew something inappropriate, calmly redirect him to a proper toy. Praise him for chewing the correct items.
2. **Withdraw all attention if he gets mouthy.** If you’ve been playing with him, the game stops: put him gently in his crate or a time-out area. Bring him out only when he’s calm.
3. **Don’t punish.** Punishing normal puppy behavior – or even abnormal puppy behavior – can create the very problems you’re trying to solve. Yelling, swatting at or grabbing a puppy can all create aggressive behavior, usually out of fear: the puppy has no idea why you’re angry and may think he’s being attacked. Focus on removing the things your dog likes as a consequence for mouthy behavior.
4. **Use a Gentle Leader (GL) to gently close his mouth.** Keep the GL on your dog (while you are there to supervise), with a drag line attached. When he gets mouthy, gently pull up on the line to close his mouth: immediately release the tension when the mouthing stops.
5. **Use the Quiet Hold to calm him.** This teaches him both to tolerate restraint and to learn to calm down. If you are an AHS Training School student, ask a trainer to show you how to do this. Never hold your puppy on his back or side in an “alpha roll” (this can lead to aggressive behavior as described above). *Warning: Do not do the Quiet Hold with dogs older than 5 months.*
6. **“Make a trade” when your dog won’t give up a forbidden item.** Hold a tasty treat under his nose and gently say, “Can I have that?” When he drops the item, give him the treat. The goal is to teach him to give you what he has in his mouth without becoming defensive. Trying to “show him who’s boss” will make him less likely to give up what is in his mouth, and may teach him to react aggressively to you.
7. **Be careful not to teach your dog to mouth you.** If your dog learns that mouthing you makes something good start (or something bad stop), he will continue doing it! Use the tips above to manage your dog’s behavior and teach him not to put his mouth on you. Doing so will ensure that he’ll grow out of it!