



**OPERATION
KINDNESS**

Managing Mouthy Puppies

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Puppies learn to explore the world around them by using their mouths. While they are with their mother and their littermates they learn valuable skills about how to use their mouth to communicate. When a puppy comes into your home it is important that you continue teaching your puppy when and where he is allowed to use his mouth as well as teach him that it is never okay to use his sharp puppy teeth on human skin. Although it may be cute to play with a puppy with your hands or feet when they are little, this is a habit that can quickly become problematic as they get older. Avoid creating bad habits when the puppy is young and instead start them off with the right lessons.

Teaching your puppy to play nice

When playing with your puppy be sure to have plenty of things for them to chew on nearby. Different puppies will like different types of textures so it is a good idea to have several different types of toys including balls, ropes, hard plastic toys like nylabones, soft plastic toys, and stuffed toys. If the puppy puts their teeth on you, remove your hands and give them a toy to put in their mouth instead. Repeat this step if the puppy puts his teeth on skin again. There is no need to yelp or shout "ouch!" at the puppy at this time since they are just learning what they should be putting their mouth on. Remember, as puppies in the litter, they learned to play using their mouths on their siblings.

If the puppy continues putting his teeth on your skin after you have redirected him to the toys, it is time to take a break. Stand up and walk away from your puppy or put your puppy in a puppy safe area or room. This will send a communication to your puppy that his teeth on skin end interactions with you. Since puppies that are playing with you want you to stick around so leaving the puppy will send a clear signal that mouthy play ends playtime with you.

Children under the age of 10 should always be supervised with mouthy puppies. Since young children are not able to respond in a way that sends a clear and consistent message to the puppy it is important that an adult is there to intervene if the puppy becomes mouthy. Often small children will pull away from the puppy, make loud noises, or run which could send the wrong signal to the puppy by encouraging their mouthy behavior.

For behavior and training advice, please contact Operation Kindness at behavior@operationkindness.org or visit www.operationkindness.org/training.