



Dog Training & Behavior Services

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Nipping & Play Biting

Two Primary Reasons Puppies Nip

- In a playful or attention seeking-manner.
- In order to get us to stop doing something (such as handling them in a particular way they don't enjoy).

It is important to recognize why the dog seems to be nipping because we treat the situations differently. It takes time, usually 1-2 weeks to see a noticeable change in this behavior. It can also get worse before it gets better. This is called an extinction burst. The reason this can happen is because the behavior previously got the dog what it wanted, and since it's not working anymore they will try harder to get it to work until eventually they realize it just won't work. We can speed up this process by helping them learn how to do things properly, not only punishing bad behavior. Keep reading to learn how to solve your nipping issues.

Play or Attention Seeking

Squeal or yipe as if the dog hurt you and ignore and/or move away from the dog – for some dogs this noise creates more excitement, in which case you should try another option.

Give the dog a no reward marker (such as “Ah, Ah!” or “No!”) and immediately remove your attention & ignore the dog.

Give the dog a no reward marker (such as “Ah, Ah!” or “No!”) and immediately remove the dog to a time-out location. The ideal time-out location would be a bathroom or other small room close by. The time-out only lasts 10-15

seconds (or until the dog is quiet), so often that doesn't give the dog time to get into things in that room. If your dog is particularly interested in stealing things, use a room without fun things to steal or if needed you can use a crate. It's important to carefully consider using the crate as a time-out location. I recommend having a sleeping crate and a separate time-out crate whenever possible. While many dogs can use a crate for time-outs without issue, some develop issues with the crate because of this. It's important to know your dog and make a decision based on your individual dog).

To stop handling, grooming etc

It's important for puppies to learn that nipping doesn't get them what they want, but calm behavior does in this situation. If your pup begins nipping while you are holding him, hold on until he relaxes, then let him go.

It's just as important to make sure we make grooming/handling experiences as positive as possible. Give the dog treats while you groom & handle to help them make positive associations with grooming and handling. Do this before the nipping starts.

Stealing Items

Some dogs steal items to invoke a game of chase, while others steal things to chew or ingest. Depending on your situation, stealing will be handled differently.

If your dog is known to ingest items, this can be a life threatening behavior and immediate training & management should be put in place. A lot of work on “Leave It” & “Drop” will help as well as practicing trades (although this can lead to stealing for the option to trade after



some time in smart pups). Managing the pups environment is also important. You should also discuss with your vet why your dog may be eating non-food items. Could it be diet related.

If your dog is stealing items, but not being destructive of them, the ideal way to curb this behavior is to simply ignore the stealing. Once your pup learns that stealing doesn't lead to a fun game of chase, they will likely stop stealing items.

If your dog is stealing items to chew, consider that he may need some additional chew toys of his own that are more engaging. Try filling Kong type toys with treats or peanut butter or use other treat dispensing toys. You can even feed full meals from these types of toys.

Remember, a tired dog is a good dog, so increase exercise to be sure your pup isn't stealing things due to boredom.



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