



Dogs Decoded
— Simply —

PUPPY BITING SURVIVAL GUIDE



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from

DOGS DECODED SIMPLY

Why do puppies bite everything?

Humans use their hands to touch and understand objects, while puppies use their mouth as their primary sensory-motor organ.

This behaviour, scientifically called "mouthing," is driven by the dense concentration of sensory nerve endings in their lips and gums, which relay detailed information about texture, temperature, and density to the brain via the trigeminal nerve.

This phase during the puppy months is a critical developmental bridge for two physiological reasons:

- **Teething and Pain Management:** puppies experience significant inflammation and discomfort as their deciduous (milk) teeth are replaced by 42 permanent adult teeth. Chewing provides mechanical counter-pressure that temporarily numbs the gums and helps the new teeth erupt through the gingival tissue.
- **Neurological Feedback Loops:** Biting is a social learning tool used to develop bite inhibition. When a puppy bites a littermate too hard and hears a high-pitched yelp, its brain processes this negative social feedback, gradually training the motor cortex to regulate the force of its jaw muscles. This process ensures they develop a "soft mouth" before their adult jaws reach full strength.



What Not To Do

When a puppy enters a "biting frenzy," our natural human instincts often lead us to do exactly what makes the behaviour worse. Certain reactions can actually overstimulate the puppy's nervous system or accidentally reward the behaviour.

Do not yell, yelp or use harsh scolding: not everybody has the same pain tolerance therefore the time when the yell comes may come at different bite levels, therefore your puppy will not understand the reason for the yelling. Also, many puppies interpret yelling as "barking" and as puppies are highly sensitive to vocal energy, loud scolding often spikes their cortisol (stress) levels, leading to one of two outcomes: 1) they think you are "barking back" in a fun and will bite harder to keep the "conversation" going 2) They begin to associate your presence with unpredictable noise, which can damage your bond and lead to defensive biting later in life.

Do not jerk your hands away: it is a reflex to pull back when you feel teeth, but fast, jerky movements trigger a puppy's prey drive. To a puppy, a hand moving quickly away is a "rabbit" or "squirrel" that needs to be caught.

Do not use physical punishment: techniques like pinning a puppy down, tapping their nose, or holding their mouth shut are outdated methods, too harsh and can lead to aggression problems at later years. Since puppies use their mouths to communicate, punishing them for it is like punishing a baby for crying: it doesn't teach them how to behave; it only teaches them that you are scary

Do not roughhouse with your hands: if you use your hands to "wrestle" with your puppy, you are explicitly teaching them that human skin is a toy.

Do not use the crate as a "Time-Out": If you grab your puppy and shove them in their crate because they are biting, they may develop a negative association with their sleeping space. The crate should be a "zen den," not a jail.

Top tips for managing the biting frenzy

- 1. Create a "Toy Rotation" System:** puppies get bored easily, which leads them to seek out "illegal" items like your shoes or furniture.
 - **Action:** Keep only 3-4 toys out at a time and swap them every few days.
 - **Texture Matching:** If your puppy is biting your ankles, give them a long tug toy they can grab low to the ground. If they are chewing wood furniture, provide a hard nylon bone or a coffee wood chew.
- 2. Use "Time Out":** removing something the puppy wants (your attention) to decrease an unwanted behaviour.
 - **Action:** The second their teeth touch your skin, or they bite something you don't want them to bite, say a neutral "No" and walk over the baby gate or the puppy den or into another room if you do not use these.
 - **The Goal:** You are teaching the puppy that biting is the "Off Switch" for all the fun. Stay gone for only 20-40 seconds—just long enough for them to reset. Repeat until the behaviour stops.
- 3. Implement regular naps:** much like human toddlers, puppies lose their "emotional regulation" when they are overtired. If your puppy is suddenly zooming around and biting everything in sight, they are likely overstimulated.
 - **Action:** Place them in a quiet, darkened crate or playpen with a soothing chew or a licky-matt. Most puppies need 18-20 hours of sleep per day. A biting frenzy is often a cry for a nap.
 - **The Goal:** to provide your puppy sufficient rest/sleep time

Top tips for managing the biting frenzy

4. Create Provide Biological Relief: Since teething involves physical inflammation, use temperature to help numb their gums.

- **Action:** Soak a clean washcloth in water (or low-sodium chicken/bone broth), twist it into a rope, and freeze it, then let your puppy chew on it, or freeze some carrots: a large, cold carrot provides a crunchy texture and soothing coldness. You can also give your puppy a Kong or a licky matt with frozen broth or yoghurt smeared over it. This encourages licking, which is a self-soothing behaviour that lowers a dog's heart rate.
- **The Goal:** help your puppy with the inflammation

5. Training Games for Impulse Control: teach your puppy that they only get what they want when they are calm.

The "Leave it" Game:

- **The Action:** Place a treat in your closed fist. Let the puppy lick and nibble at your hand. The moment they pull their head back and stop, open your hand and give them the treat.
- **Goal:** This builds the "pre-frontal cortex" of their brain, helping them think before they react with their mouth.

6. The "lamppost" or "tree" technique:

- **The Action:** If they are nipping at your hands or feet, hold your body completely still and let your limbs go limp.
- **The Goal:** to teach your puppy when biting happens, the fun stops.

Chew replacements

Puppy biting

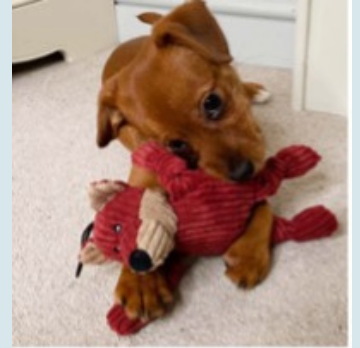
Human skin

Why

Warm,
soft

Substitute with

Plush toys,
soft latex/rubber
toys/squeakers



Puppy biting

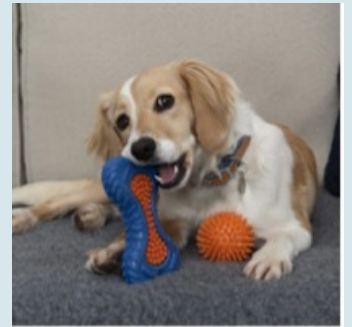
Shoes,
Leather

Why

Smelly,
tough

Substitute with

Bully sticks, thick
rubber toys



Puppy biting

Table legs

Why

Hard, stable,
rough, earthy

Substitute with

Wood sticks



Puppy biting

Clothing

Why

flappy,
triggers prey
drive

Substitute with

Long fleece tug
ropes

