

# Nipping, Chewing and Biting!

## Oh my!

One of the first things that you will notice when you bring your new puppy home is that he is a biting, nipping machine. He will attack your toes and fingers with wild abandon. The second thing you will notice is that he is equipped with a full set of razor sharp teeth that are quite capable of breaking skin and drawing blood.

Nipping, chewing and biting behavior is more than a little unpleasant – so let's look at the reasons behind it and the best way to change the behavior.

Most puppies learn basic bite inhibition and puppy manners while with their Mom and litter mates. This is why it is so important for puppies to stay with moms for a minimum of 9 to 12 weeks. During this period of time, puppies also need lots of socialization with people and other animals. They truly need the social interaction to grow and understand how to interact with the world.

**NOTE:** Before taking a puppy into the world, make sure that it is up to date on all vaccinations.

## WHY DO PUPPIES NIP, CHEW AND BITE?

1. **Play** – Puppies have no thumbs! They use their mouths to play with their litter mates or interact with their human family.
2. **Teething** – Incessant chewing helps to soothe sore gums.
3. **Boredom** – Pups are easily bored! When they have extra time on their paws, they chew to help alleviate the boredom.
4. **Curiosity** – Watch out if something chew worthy has been left lying within your puppy's reach. Be sure to pick up

items that you do not want your puppy to chew on. He cannot tell the difference between a hundred dollar pair of leather boots and a squeaky toy.

Puppies are little and cute, but take care not to allow or encourage your puppy to chew on fingers and toes – or worse yet on earlobes and noses. Puppies can get carried away, and you might end up with an undesired body piercing.

It is much more difficult to stop a learned behavior than it is to prevent it in the first place. Do not tolerate nipping, chewing and biting from your puppy!

## **TRAINING STRATEGIES**

Puppies use their mouths when interacting with their litter mates. If they play too rough or bite down too hard the other pup will squeal and walk away from the game. This teaches the offending puppy that when he behaves badly the game will end. The pup soon realizes that his behavior is not being rewarded and he will learn to use his mouth in a gentler fashion. The goal is to mimic this behavior at home.

### **Nipping & Biting**

1. When your pup begins to chew on your feet or hands, immediately Yelp! loudly and remove your hands or feet away from the puppy.
2. Ignore your puppy for approximately 15 seconds and try again.
3. If the puppy continues to bite, leave the room or give him a “time out”.
4. Never allow your puppy to chew or bite, and use this method consistently.

### **Chewing**

1. When your pup is chewing on things that are inappropriate, remove the item from your puppy’s mouth

- and replace it with an appropriate toy or snack.
2. Do not force the item out of his mouth if he won't give it up – offer him a better alternative!
  3. After the puppy releases the item, be sure to praise profusely for the correct behavior.
  4. When teething, puppies gums hurt, and they will chew on anything available to relieve their discomfort. It is important to provide chew toys that can help them survive this difficult time.
  5. Teach your puppy the difference between dog toys and items that are off limits. Set “traps” that make the dog's items fun to chew and off limits items unpleasant. Leave off limits items on the floor, but spray them with a foul-tasting deterrent spray such as [Bitter Apple](#) or [Bitter End](#).
  6. Add fun dog-appropriate items to the mix. When your puppy picks up a forbidden item, it will taste bad and he will spit it out and move on to a fun toy.

Offer praise when your puppy is chewing something that you approve of. Never miss the opportunity to reward correct behavior. A bored puppy will find entertainment. Generally, this does not turn out well for us or any possessions that we might leave within easy reach.

Always leave plenty of chew toys and games around for your puppy. [Click here for puppy entertainment recommendations!](#)

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## The Name Game

Dogs love games, and so do we! The Name Game helps to

reinforce name recognition and recall, but it can also be a lot of fun. This game teaches your puppy that answering to his name is not only exciting but very rewarding.



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As a training technique, the Name Game is important even if your dog recognizes its name already. The true purpose of this exercise is to let your pup know that when he hears his name something good happens. When you call Sparky, he will be not only be willing but also happy to look at you and respond to you in a positive manner.

## HOW TO PLAY

Start out slowly and build up to a challenge...

**EASY** – Call your pups/dogs name in a happy voice, “Sparky!” If Sparky even glances in your direction click or say, “Good Sparky!” Then give him a treat. You can also toss treats if he is further away from you. Next, wait for your dog to look away from you. Call his name in your happy voice. Say nothing but his name. When he turns towards you, click and treat or praise and treat!

TIP: If your pup does not know his name or respond at all to your tone of voice try adding a kissy noise or some other ridiculous sound to get him to turn toward you. Do not add other words. You want him to respond to his name.

TIP: If all else fails drop down to dog level and call your dog’s name, pat the floor. Praise and treat when your dog looks at you.

**MEDIUM** – Practice this exercise any time you are with your pup/dog.. This can be when you are washing dishes, watching TV, working in your flowerbeds or just watching a sunset. Wait for your dog to be distracted, call his name and when he responds, immediately praise in a happy voice! If you happen to have a treat or his favorite toy you may give that to him as well. The better the reward, the more likely he will be to

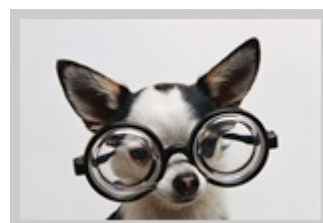
repeat the behavior.

**HARD** – Call your dog from another room. You can even play Hide and Seek with your dog!

## **VERY IMPORTANT TIP: NEVER CORRUPT YOUR DOGS NAME**

- Never use your dog's name in a negative manner.
  - Never use your dog's name to correct him. He must only associate it with the best things.
  - Never call your pup to you to correct a problem. Go to him and take care of the problem in a fair manner.
  - Looking at you or running toward you when his name is called should always be rewarded.
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## **Watch me game**



Dogs love games, and so do we! The Watch Me Game helps to teach your dog to focus on you. All training activities depend on having your dog's attention. If your friend is not paying attention, he will learn nothing.

### **HOW TO PLAY**

- Place a small, soft treat between your thumb and middle finger. This will leave your index finger free so that you can actually point it toward your eyes.
- Hold the treat towards your dog nose. Let him sniff the treat.
- Have your index finger out and raise it towards your eyes. Actually point at your eyes. Your pups nose will

follow the treat. What pup/dog could resist a yummy smelling goodie?

- When your pup makes eye contact, immediately click and treat or praise and treat.. Increase the length of time by 1-2 seconds each time.

You can increase the challenge by lengthening the amount of time your dog must stay focused before receiving the treat. Practice this often and make sure your making this rewarding for your best friend. This is one of the most important exercises that you and your dog can master.

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## Puppy ping-pong game

Here is another example of using a game to reinforce desired behaviors. In this case, we want to teach your dog that it is always good and fun to come when called. This game works best if you have a hallway in your home.

Even a small one can work. If you do not have a hallway then go to an enclosed room and have everyone sit in a large circle.



### HOW TO PLAY

- Draft a team of two or more human participants. This game works best with multiple humans.
- Each human player should be well armed with rewards for your dog, including favorite dog treats, toys and a clicker (if you use one).
- If you are playing in a hallway, situate one person at each end.

- Have each person take turns calling the dog to them. Start by calling the dog's name in a happy, excited voice. "Sparky! Hurry, hurry, hurry! Let's go!" When he comes running to you say, "Good dog! Good Come!"
- Give the dog a treat when he goes to a player on command.

After your dog is reliably returning to you, take him outside to an enclosed area and play the game with more distractions. The more you do this and the better the reward, the more likely your puppy will return to you no matter what the distraction.

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## Hide-n-Seek Game

Hide-N-Seek is a more advanced game that reinforces name recognition and recall. Play this game often and soon your dog will seek you out every time you call. At that point you can add the word "come" when you call him.



### HOW TO PLAY

1. Provide every player with your dog's favorite treats, toys and a clicker (if you use one).
2. Have one person sit in a place out of sight, holding your dog so that he cannot see you.
3. Hide in another room and call your dog by name. Do not use the word "come" until you are sure that he is going

to come running. You should start by calling your dog's name in a happy, excited voice. "Sparky! Hurry, hurry, hurry! Let's go!" When he comes running to you say, "Good puppy! Good Come!" At this point you can praise using the word come as Sparky is already rushing towards you.

4. Incorporate whistling, clapping, snapping your fingers, or anything else that gets your dog excited and causes him to come running to you.
5. If you have a helper, he should "hide" and then call the dog in the same manner.

This game can be played with only one person by waiting for Sparky to get distracted and start to wander off. Just jump behind a doorway or into a closet and use the same technique described above.

**IMPORTANT TIP:** The more you yell "COME, COME, COME!" at your dog the less likely it is that he will come the first time you call him. Every time you use the word and furry friend does not return to you are setting back your training. This teaches your dog that he does not need to come when you first call him. He will assume that he does not have to return to you until he's ready. Instead of yelling "COME" at your dog, try other words and sounds to encourage him to return to you.

If your dog struggles with Hide-N-Seek, you can start with [The Name Game](#) and [Puppy Ping-Pong](#).