

## **Mouthing/ Nipping**

The rule is no teeth on people. Mouthing is often directly related to being overtired for dogs this age. Be sure your dog is getting at least 2 naps a day, morning and afternoon for at least an hour.

If he gets mouthy, freeze and look away with your arms crossed over your chest. Give your dog a chance to redirect their mouthiness onto a toy. Give the toy and then cross your arms and look away. Be adamant not to look at him for a bit and see if he gives up (it might take him a minute). If he keeps coming back to it, put him in his crate with something to chew to reset him and try again in a few minutes or longer if he's been out a while and you suspect he's over tired and over-stimulated.

When playing with him, if he mouths your clothes, hands or arms, come up with a phrase like "I don't think so," cross your arms wait for him to stop and then re-engage. If he can't hold it together, the play stops. If he can't redirect himself onto a toy, he gets a time out to reset. If you're outside you can try tying his leash to something and moving away for a few seconds to give him a chance to regroup, or simply putting your foot on it, crossing your arms across your chest and looking away.

After a bit of practice, you will start to see a shift, usually a hesitation or, he may walk away for a few moments to calm himself. Quietly praise him if you see this as this is the beginning of self-control.

Playtime with other dogs and puppies is essential for pups to learn how to inhibit their bite. This means as an adult, if your dog is hurt or scared and he bites someone, he doesn't use all the force of his jaw. This is the difference between a serious bite or, just a scratch. If puppies don't get this time to practice with other dogs, they practice on their people, and that's no fun for anyone, especially if you have children. In general, people don't usually give accurate feedback to teach a dog how to use their mouths in a gentle way that becomes automatic when they are interacting with people. Only another dog can teach this with the precision needed for them to get it.

If the above doesn't work for your puppy, it means you are not providing enough time in a crate away from you, and your puppy is overtired and in need of rest away from stimulation. Overtired puppies tend to be very mouthy and bitey and don't easily take no for an answer (think over-tired toddlers and tantrums).

The crate can be used as a consequence and reset for not taking feedback. I recommend using the 3 strikes and you're out rule. If your puppy doesn't shift his behavior after giving him feedback 3 times, put him in a crate with something to chew and try again in an hour. This is essential to teaching self-control and self-regulation. If your puppy doesn't learn this at a young age, it makes the teenage stage much worse. Prevention of a punky adolescent dog is far easier than trying to fix a major behavior problem. You'll be glad you invested the time now for years and years of benefit.

