



PUPPY MOUTHING, NIPPING, AND BITING

All puppies bite. It's NORMAL. And some bite more than others.

There's all sorts of factors that influence how much any puppy is likely to bite, from its mother's health and behaviour, the rearing environment, how the breeder acts, to what the new owners do. Like with small children, overtiredness can increase biting and the puppy's diet and health can also affect how much those sharp little puppy teeth come into play.

We used to say "Say 'ouch!' whenever the puppy mouths and applies too much pressure, and stop playing with it". That worked with some puppies – but it also makes some bite MORE, and those who did stop biting were sometimes scared by the "ouch". Not what we want with a new puppy.

Attempts at deterring the puppy (e.g. pushing it away) and physically discouraging the puppy (e.g. tapping on the nose) can also increase the biting – so don't do it!

So what can you do to stop your crocodile monster puppy? Here are some suggestions:

- ◆ Go still the moment those sharp little teeth touch your skin – especially keep your hands still. Movement is likely to trigger more, and more intense, biting
- ◆ Distract the puppy onto acceptable ways to use his teeth. Encourage him to bite toys and chews instead of you
- ◆ Make sure your puppy gets plenty of quiet rest time, and stick to the recommended exercise levels for walks (5 minutes per month of life, twice a day) so it doesn't get overtired
- ◆ Avoid tug of war games if the puppy becomes too excited, aggressive, or out of control. Tug of war games should only be allowed when you can stop the game with a leave, drop or that'll do cue. Then play again!
- ◆ Avoid wrestling games with the puppy

Gentle mouthing as a form of play can be OK, if you are happy to allow it, but it should not be started by the puppy, and everyone in the family must be able to stop it on cue. Where there are elderly or young children in the home it's best not to allow any mouthing or play biting.

You'll probably find your puppy bites more at particular times, such as:

- during boisterous children's play, especially with lots of running around
- evenings, or sometimes other times of day, during the puppy mad half hour (the zoomies)
- when visitors arrive

Be prepared – shut the puppy away in his crate or small room with a chew such as a filled Kong, or keep the puppy on a lead so you can help your puppy calm and settle quickly. During the zoomies, make sure you have plenty of toys and chews to distract your puppy onto acceptable biting outlets.

For puppies who bite a lot, leave a lead and collar attached when the puppy is with the family. Mouthing or biting can be stopped by gently pulling the puppy away on the lead, with tension released as soon as the puppy settles.

If biting gets completely out of hand, use a "time out" for 20-30 seconds (putting the puppy outside the room and shutting the door). Only let the puppy back in when they are quiet. Don't use crates for short time outs.

And if you are struggling, book a Premier Puppy Package– see <https://downdog.co.uk/PuppyPackage> for details and to book. Get it right from the start and avoid future problems.