





Horsham

Puppy School

Play Biting

What you need:

-  Long toys
-  Kongs (filled, frozen)
-  Chews
-  Puppy play pen

Play biting is a very normal and common behaviour in pups and is the number one question I get asked by clients. Here are a few tips to help you and your pup get through this phase of their development.

Why do they do it?

Pups explore the world through their mouths and you can see them interacting with their littermates with little bites and nips. They are learning a very important skill called 'bite inhibition'. Bite inhibition is how our pups learn to bite gently.

Why we don't recommend 'yelping' or a 'stern no'

We don't want to teach pups that they can't bite; biting is a very necessary behaviour for pups and if they can't do it then they will build in frustration and biting will increase. As mentioned above, our pups need to learn about the different strength of bites so we need to teach them that there are appropriate things to bite on.



Pups are very motivated by movement and high pitched tones so 'yelping' and pulling hands away will generally serve to make your puppy more excited and increase the biting (and also why you may see this more directed towards children). Saying 'no' may suppress the behaviour or even frighten shy pups and will be detrimental to your developing relationship.

What we do recommend

We don't want to suppress natural behaviours (they will just surface elsewhere) but we can redirect them. Toy play is something we emphasise a lot at Horsham Puppy School and is a great way to let puppies know what they can bite on. Use long, fluffy toys and get your pup really engaged in the toy but moving the toy in swift movements along the floor. Whenever they engage with the toy, praise them and continue the game. If they start to bite hands, keep your hands very still and then move the toy. As pups are motivated by movement, they generally redirect back on to the toy.

What else?

The biting is worse when pups are excited or over tired (have you ever seen a toddler who's not had enough sleep?!) and it's really important to ensure your pup has a balance of activity during the course of the day as well as lots of rest (on average pups need 16+ hours sleep a day. Ensure naps are given away from the main thoroughfare so that it is undisturbed sleep). Pups will generally bite in the morning when they see you as they are really excited that you are up;



bring a toy with you and engage pup with that immediately or sprinkle some breakfast kibble on the floor so pup engages in this game keeping their arousal levels low.

Training and brain games that keep arousal levels low such as a snuffle mats, chews and filled Kongs will help your pup settle and relax in the evening. Take these out just before their 'witching hour' also known as the 'zoomies' to help them gradually transition to sleep (generally around 6/7pm). Physical activity is one way to help pups achieve sleep but as baby puppies we need to ensure that they don't get over exercised (this can cause damage to joints and muscles) so getting their brains tired is a much better way to help them relax and rest which in turn will mean they bite less (ensure brain games are low arousal such as sniffing games, handling time and position practice rather than lively recalls or high energy games).

If all else fails

If you are achieving the above but are still having difficulty then removing pup will be necessary. These are often called 'time outs' but this is not a punishment. Pups are not being 'naughty' generally they are just tired or over excited and we just need them to give them time to decompress. Avoid using a crate for a time out as they can be very restrictive to movement and pups will become frustrated or distressed if already very over aroused. A puppy play pen is a great tool and can contain their crate (with door open), some toys such as a snuffle mat and you can give them a chew or Kong (supervised) to allow them to just take a little time to relax. Allow them back in to the main hub when they've had a chance to calm but be careful not to immediately get them over aroused again.



Further reading

There is further information in your Puppy School Manual in the Week 2 section.

