

Let's Learn About

Bite Inhibition
& Puppy Biting



Play biting and mouthing are natural behaviors for puppies. Almost all pups nip at our hands, feet, or clothing. It's normal puppy behavior, even though we don't like it! Puppies need to be able to play-bite and mouth in order to learn how to play more gently.

Puppies learn how to play gently primarily from their mom and litter-mates. Puppies learn bite inhibition by biting and nipping at each other: if one pup bites another too hard, the bitten pup responds with a loud and startling yelp. If the biter does not play more gently, then the puppy who was bitten gets up and leaves. This reaction helps train the puppy that hard mouthing causes startling noises or ends the game; while soft bites mean the play continues.

Unfortunately, many puppies are taken from their mom and litter-mates too early, so people must teach bite inhibition to them. This can be done by mimicking the reactions that the puppy's litter-mates would give for inappropriate biting. To train a soft mouth, pet your puppy and let the puppy mouth your hand. If the puppy bites hard, say "OUCH!" in a high-pitched voice. If the puppy shows signs of remorse (i.e. backing away or licking you), then continue petting. If the puppy continues to bite, walk away, giving the puppy a short time-out. Repeat until the puppy restrains its bite.



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Puppy Socialization



Proper socialization is essential to helping your dog become a good member of the family and community. Lack of socialization is the major reason dogs become fearful of people, the environment, and other dogs. It is also a major reason for dog bites. It is very important that you not keep your puppy home during its first weeks with you while it bonds with you or while you are waiting for its final shots. By the time it has finished its final series of shots, the time for socialization has most likely passed for good. In this day and age, puppies are much more likely to meet an early death due to behaviors stemming from a lack of socialization than they are to catch a communicable disease, although the risk is always there.

You can socialize your dog safely by creating a positive experience with as many different people and situations as possible. Some trainers believe that during the first 100 days of the puppy's life, the puppy should meet 100 new people.

To socialize your puppy, give her small, tasty treats while you take her to new situations. Suggestions include:

- Meet children who are not family members. Try taking your puppy to a children's soccer or baseball game. Try taking your puppy to a playground.
- Meet people using a wheel chair, cane, or walker. See if a nursing home will allow your puppy to meet its residents.
- Meet people carrying a large object (suitcase, box, musical instrument, etc.). Sit in front of your local post office with your pup.
- Meet people in a uniform. Go to your local fire station or police station.
- Meet dogs at pet stores.
- Try to get together with friends who have friendly dogs.
- Take a puppy kindergarten class.
- Visit a crowded place (a busy sidewalk, mall, athletic event, parade, etc.). Try taking your pup for a walk in the Strip District or down a main street in the nearest town.
- Experience a new, loud noise (doorbell, vacuum cleaner, siren, etc.).
- Watch someone go by on a bicycle, skateboard, skates, or sled.
- Meet someone wearing a hat, scarf, bulky coat, or sunglasses.

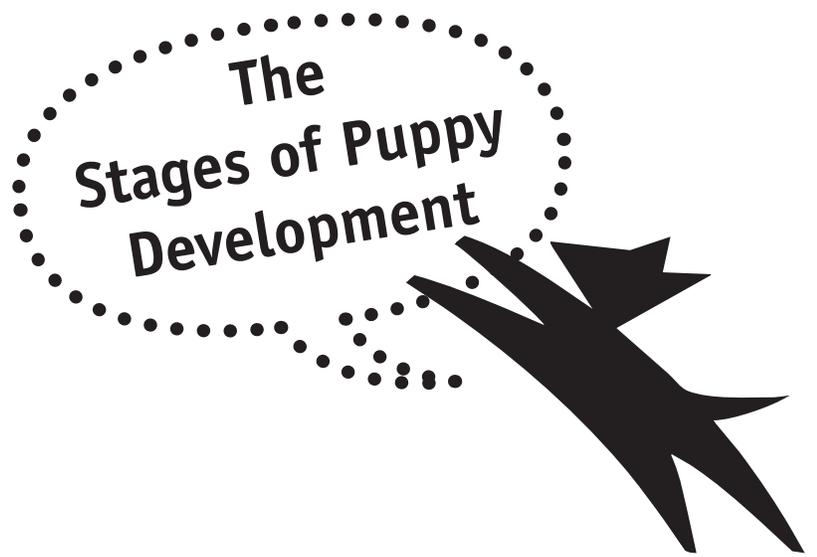
Observe your puppy carefully for signs of discomfort and stop if the dog appears to be having difficulty. Some signs of stress include barking, panting, backing away, rigid body, or refusing a treat. Give your puppy treats generously so that it associates the new experience with a positive consequence.



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NEONATAL: birth through 12 days

During this stage, the puppy's sensory capabilities start to develop. They can not see or hear well. They tend to stay close to their mother.

TRANSITION PERIOD: 2 to 3 weeks

During this stage, the pup's eyes open and their ears are further developed. At this stage, they begin to startle to sounds. Their mobility is increasing and they start to exhibit social behaviors.

PRIMARY SOCIALIZATION PERIOD: 3 weeks to 12/16 weeks

This is the time period in which puppies do best in developing relationships with people and other dogs/animals and in exploring novel environments. It is during this time period that puppies must be introduced to people, places, and things to ensure that they are well socialized. Lack of socialization is the major reason dogs become fearful of people, the environment, and other dogs. Socialize your dog by creating a positive experience with as many different people and situations as possible.

After 16 weeks it is no longer easy for the pup to be comfortable and confident in any situation. During the 3 to 16 week time-frame, puppies should be introduced to people of varying races, age, and to people wearing sunglasses, hats, etc. During this period of time, puppies should also experience different surfaces like sand, ceramic tile, wet surfaces, manholes, and gravel. During this time period, puppies should be introduced to strange smells and sounds as well.



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