



On Puppy Biting and Jumping

Normal vs. Not

First of all, rest assured that nipping and jumping are very typical behaviors in puppies, it is how they interact with each other and the world. They don't have hands so exploring the world means crawling all over it, jumping up to see and 'feeling' things with their mouth. These behaviors work for the puppy as it gives them information about their world. If we respond to the nipping and jumping behaviors by giving our puppy attention (remember even negative attention is reinforcing) then the behaviors work for them!

So our goal is to set the puppy up for success by preventing the unwanted behaviors and rewarding those interactive behaviors we like.

Prevention is Key

Having a 'handle' on your puppy can help prevent most biting and jumping issues. I like to use a 4-5 foot length of cloths line attached to the puppy's collar with a clip while the puppy is at large in the house. This gives me something to grab when the puppy is about to get into trouble. It also gives me the ability to quickly tether the puppy to a solid object should I need to keep him/her out from under foot.

Keep interactions with your puppy relatively low key. A lot of nipping behaviors are the result of overstimulated puppies! Kids running around waving their hands, lots of hustle and bustle when you're getting ready in the morning for work/school and the sudden rush when the kids come home from school are all times when puppies get over stimulated and wound up. Prepare for these times by having the puppy fed, pottied and back in his crate with a nice long lasting chew toy, like a bully stick or marrow bone so that the puppy doesn't get over stimulated.

Encourage Acceptable Behavior

While you are interacting with your puppy, redirect your puppy's penchant for nipping and biting by offering him more acceptable objects such as soft stuffed toys. This technique can be especially effective when children want to pet him. As you or the child reaches out to scratch him behind the ears with one hand, offer the chew toy with the other. This will not only help your puppy learn that people and petting are wonderful, but will also keep his mouth busy while he's being petted. Alternate which hand does the petting and which one has the chew toy. You may need to start off by petting or scratching your puppy for short periods of time, since the longer he's petted, the more likely he is to get excited and start to nip.

Discourage and Redirect Unacceptable Behavior

You can hand a very little puppy a chew toy when they nip to let them know that chew toys are for biting, hands are not.

You must also teach your puppy to be gentle with hands, and show him that nipping results in your attention going away. If you feel your puppies teeth on your skin, calmly stand up and walk away. Leave the room if you must, but ignore him until he's calm, and then try again.



Manage their Environment

Beware the over stimulated or overtired puppy who will continue to nip, jump and behave badly regardless of what you do, if this happens it is time for some crate time! Crate time is not a punishment, it is there to allow the puppy to settle down or take a nap, just like an over stimulated toddler sometimes just needs some down time.

You can also use a tether rather than a crate to keep your puppy in a specific area while providing them with a tasty chew bone. A tether is a 4-5' length of clothesline rope with clips on either end for ease of use. Clip one end to something sturdy (table leg, heavy chair leg, post) and the other to the puppy, this will limit the puppies ability to follow kids, nips at heels and hands, etc., while still allowing the puppy to be out of their crate.

Jumping Up

When your puppy jumps up on you, he wants attention. Even if you push him away, he is still getting attention (even if it is a response that you might consider *negative*).

When your puppy jumps up:

Fold your arms in front of you, turn away from him, walk away if you need to.

Continue to turn away from him until all four paws are on the ground, then quietly praise him and give him a treat. If he knows the "sit" command, give the command when all four paws are on the ground, then quietly praise him and give him a treat while he's in the sitting position.

If he begins to jump while you're praising him, simply turn away and repeat the second step, above. Remember to keep your praise low-key.

When your puppy realizes that he gets no attention from you while he's jumping up, but does get attention when he sits, he'll stop jumping up. Remember, once you've taught him to come and sit quietly for attention, you must reward his behavior. Be careful not to ignore him when he comes and sits politely, waiting for your attention.

What **Not** to Do

Attempts to tap, slap, or hit your puppy in the face for nipping or jumping up are almost guaranteed to backfire. Several things may happen, depending on your puppy's temperament and the severity of the correction:

He could become "hand-shy" and cringe or cower whenever a hand comes toward his face.

He could become afraid of you, and refuse to come to you or approach you at all.

He could respond in a defensive manner and attempt to bite you to defend himself.

He could interpret a mild slap as an invitation to play, causing him to become more excited and even more likely to nip.

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Set boundaries when playing "tug-of-war" or wrestling games with your puppy. When trained properly, these types of games can teach your puppy bite restraint and the limitations of rough play.

Be Consistent

It's important that all behaviors, acceptable and unacceptable, be managed consistently by all family members. And remember that any method you try will probably not be effective unless you work hard to teach your puppy an acceptable alternative behavior.

A Note About Children and Puppies

It's very difficult for children under eight or nine years old to practice the kind of behavior modification outlined here. Children's first reaction to being nipped or mouthed by a puppy is to push the puppy away with their hands and arms and squeal. This will be interpreted by the puppy as play and will probably cause the puppy to nip and mouth even more. **Adults should closely and actively monitor all interactions between their children and dogs.**

I hope that these suggestions help you. It will take some time to work so don't expect too much of your puppy straight away, remember they are babies and need repetition to learn. They are also interacting in a way that is very natural for them, to not use their mouth is highly unnatural and a behavior that must be learned!