

MOUTHINESS IN ADULT DOGS

Mouthing is a behavior that all dogs exhibit as puppies. Their mouth is what they use to explore the world. It is an integral tool during playtime with other dogs, and their primary tool when interacting with objects.

Many puppies will learn not to mouth their owners when they are young, as puppies are very sensitive to correction. Adult dogs who mouth people probably never learned not to do so during puppyhood. It's likely that their human parents didn't teach them how to be gentle or to chew toys instead.

Most mouthing is normal dog behavior, and can be easily corrected through training. This is true even for adult dogs.

Teaching Bite Inhibition

Bite inhibition refers to a dog's ability to control the force of his mouthing. A puppy or dog who hasn't learned bite inhibition with people doesn't recognize the sensitivity of human skin, so he bites too hard, even in play.

When playing with your dog and he goes to mouth you, immediately give a high-pitched yelp, as if you're hurt, and let your hand go limp. This should startle your dog and causing him to stop mouthing you, at least momentarily. (If yelping seems to have no effect, you can say "All done!" in a stern voice instead and walk away from your dog.) Praise your dog for stopping or for licking you. Then resume play. If your dog mouths you hard again, yelp again. Repeat these steps no more than three times within a 15-minute period. If the mouthiness becomes excessive, stand up and walk away from your dog.

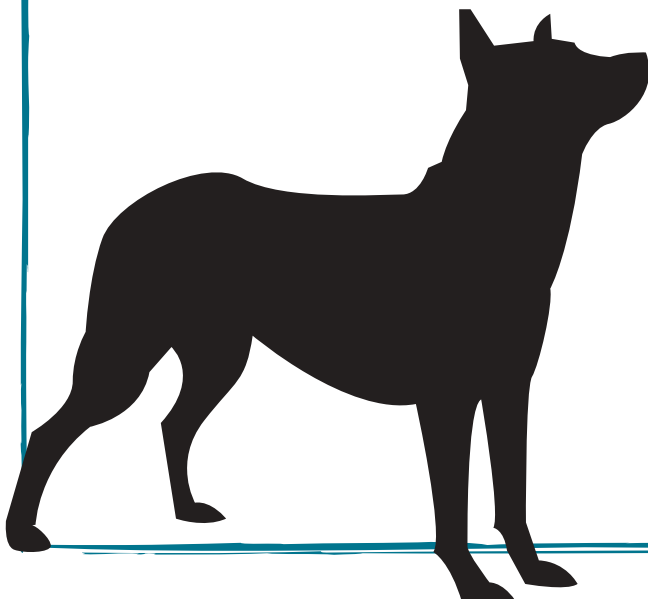
Teach Your Dog: No Teeth On Skin

- Substitute a toy or chew bone when your dog tries to gnaw on fingers or toes.
- Dogs often mouth on people's hands when stroked, patted and scratched.
- If your dog gets all riled up when you pet him, distract him by feeding him small treats from your other hand.
- Encourage non-contact forms of play, such as fetch and tug-of-war, rather than wrestling and rough play with your hands.]
- Teach your dog impulse control with specific exercises such as sit, wait and leave it.
- Provide plenty of interesting and new toys and things to chew.
- Provide plenty of opportunities for your dog to play with other friendly, vaccinated dogs if your dog is dog friendly. If you are unaware how your dog does with other furry friends, consult with a professional trainer or daycare facility for assistance.
- If all else fails, consider using a taste deterrent. Spray the deterrent on areas of your body and clothing that your dog likes to mouth before you start interacting with him. Do not spray taste deterrent at your dog or in their mouth.

Remember, training a dog requires patience and consistency. If you're working on decreasing your dog's mouthiness, don't allow friends or children to come over and "wind up" your pet or encourage play biting.

Be sure everyone in your network understands and follows the rules.

If you need guidance on how to teach your dog or are struggling with getting your dog to catch on to this process, contact a professional trainer or contact the Behavior Manager at behavior@hamiltonhumane.com.



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