

GREENWOOD DOG TRAINING SCHOOL



Puppy Biting and Chewing

Why do puppies spend so much time chewing on us and our things? Well, there are several reasons, actually. First of all, munching on things is normal young puppy behavior - they have a very strong need to chew. Problems usually result when they aren't taught limits on chewing on people, when they aren't given enough exercise, and when they have too much access to the household.

Prevention

Now, puppies **do** have a need to chew - especially when they are teething. But they must be taught what is okay for them to chew on... and what is not! Be sure to supply your puppy with appropriate chews:

- marrow bones (from your local butcher or grocery store)
- pig ears
- bullysticks
- Kong toys or sterilized bones (fill the middle with something delicious. Treats jammed in there, to be worked out one at a time, or the entire insides smeared with canned dog food, peanut butter, or cream cheese can keep a puppy entertained & happy for hours, especially if you freeze them first)
- treat-dispensing toys (this kind of chew toy is mentally stimulating as well)
- just leave a couple of toys out for your dog (too many become boring - you can have many different kinds, just rotate which ones you have out each day)

Take steps to not inadvertently encourage the biting:

- don't pet an active, rowdy puppy on the head
- limit wearing loose, dangling clothing
- be calm & quiet (this is especially crucial for young children)

And, most importantly:

- exercise and train that puppy (then give him something delicious to chew)
- move any household object that is dangerous (or valued) out of his reach for now (and/or spray with Bitter Apple or Tabasco sauce - be careful about staining, though)

What to do when he bites

What should you do when, despite all of your effort, he still bites? First of all, do what his litter mates and mother would have done. Tolerate gentle mouthing (it's important that he learn how much is too much), but when he chomps hard enough to hurt, yelp and move away. For a young puppy, then redirect his interests into something more appropriate. Toss a ball for him, give him a proper chew toy, etc. This works as well for puppies as it does for toddlers!

If he continues to try to chomp on you, then ignore him completely - by putting him in a puppy "time out." Leave the room (if someone is still there to supervise him) or take him & very matter-of-factly put him in his crate. **Don't talk to him or make eye contact - just get him in that crate quickly & calmly** (unless you get nasty about it - which I am not advising - he shouldn't begin to resent his crate over this). Leave him there for a few moments to think about why he was just excluded from the "pack." Of course, he's really likely to whine, cry, & bark. Be sure NOT to let him out while he is doing any of that... unless you want to encourage that behavior. Just wait for a brief pause in the noise, then walk back in quickly, praise him for being quiet & let him out to rejoin the family (or leave an exhausted puppy there to nap). All is forgiven, after all... he is just a baby. It will likely take quite a few times before he makes the connection between the biting and the time-outs, so be prepared to do this often at first. **And... be sure to follow all of the advice regarding prevention!**