

Don't bite the hand that feeds you.

Play-biting is a behavior that all puppies display. But no matter how small the puppy and no matter how diminutive the breed, those little needle teeth can do real damage to your hand and fingers.

For play biting, we recommend two games. The first teaches your dog that it is okay to mouth you, but not to bite you. It is called Bite Inhibition. Take a step-by-step approach to teaching this.

You may allow your puppy to lightly mouth your hand. If your puppy presses down with those razor sharp puppy teeth, you yell "OUCH" and storm out of the room and close the door behind you. Stay in the room for about 1 minute. It is not how long you are gone that teaches your dog the lesson; it is the act of leaving. You are trying to teach your dog that biting too hard ends all of the fun. You must be consistent. If you are playing with your dog and she is mouthing you with an acceptable pressure, keep playing. But the instant she causes you any pain, do what her litter mate would do, yelp loudly, get up, and leave the room.

The other strategy, especially if your dog is a persistently hard biter is to use the following Hidden Correction: tongue compression. If you are playing with your puppy and she bites you too hard, press down on the back of her tongue with one of your fingers. To keep the correction Hidden, maintain a positive attitude. You don't want your dog to think she is being punished; you just want her to think, "Wow, this human has no idea how to play this game." If your dog bites you too hard, press her tongue as you say, "Yeah, let's play the biting game."

It is important that you press your dog's tongue hard enough to make her stop biting and pull away. If you don't press hard enough, you will inadvertently teach your dog to tolerate pressure in its mouth. That's great if you are training an attack dog, but exactly the wrong thing to do if you are training a pet to be polite.

It is also critical that you not over apply pressure. If you press on your dog's tongue and she pulls back, immediately release the pressure. Don't continue to drive your finger down her throat in an effort to "teach her a lesson." You are not trying to punish her; you are only trying to demonstrate that you are not good at this game and that playing it with you is no fun. It's called *feigned incompetence*. Be like the hapless husband who burns the meal every time his wife asks him to cook. Pretty soon she quits asking, probably never realizing that was his intent all along.