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Puppy Biting

You already know puppy biting hurts. It's sometimes relentless and in some cases it's even pretty scary. But there is good news. Puppy biting (also called mouthing) is normal behavior. The better news is puppy biting provides you an excellent opportunity to teach your puppy one very important lesson: human skin is extremely fragile.

Adult dogs have very powerful jaws. The average dog has the strength to crush small bones. But the average adult dog also uses her mouth to play. She may even occasionally play bite. So how does a dog know when it's appropriate to bite lightly for play and when it's appropriate to use her bone-crushing strength? You guessed it. She learned as a puppy.

Puppies have very weak jaws and needle sharp teeth. When puppies play with each other or other adult dogs they may play bite. The playmates let the puppy know when her little teeth have bitten down too hard. How? If the puppy bites too hard the other dog yelps and *immediately* ends the play session. The little puppy loses her playmate. Watch puppies play and you'll see this in action. Nothing is more upsetting to a young puppy than losing her chance to play. Those sharp teeth of hers ended the fun. Next time she'll bite more softly. Now the little puppy is learning how fragile other dogs are.

You might find that other dogs can tolerate a little more from your puppy than you can. Human skin really is fragile. So we need to teach puppy to bite softly. That's different than teaching her not to bite at all. We *want* the puppy to experiment with us so she knows we injure easily. That way, if your puppy ever bites as an adult dog she'll set her mouth at human strength not bone-crushing strength.

Let your puppy mouth your hand and harm playfully. Tolerate the soft biting. Before long she will try a little harder bite. Immediately let her know how much it hurt. No need to act like a dog by yelping. But you may decide to play act a bit. Ham it up. Yell OUCH as convincingly and indignantly as you can. Then *end* the puppy's play session by leaving the room for a minute. Keep this up until you find your puppy is biting more softly more often. In time, you will begin discouraging all puppy biting.

It is vitally important that your puppy grows up to become an adult dog who knows the strength of her own mouth. Sign up for a puppy class right away. Or if you need more individual assistance, please call a North Coast Dogs Trainer immediately.

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