

Mouthing and Nipping

What is it? Mouthing and nipping occurs when your dog puts their mouth or teeth on your hands, feet, clothing, or other body parts during play or excitement. This is a very common behavior in dogs, which is typically done with positive intent, such as getting attention or continuing play. Whether or not harm is caused, it is a behavior we want to address early on to prevent escalation.



Managing Mouthy Behavior

Tip 1: Mouthy behavior often occurs in moments of excitement. Give your dog time to calm down prior to interacting with them.

Tip 2: If your dog starts mouthing you, remain calm. Slowly stand up, wrap your arms over your chest, and tuck your hands under your arms. Wait for your dog to place all four feet on the floor and remove their mouth from you. If your dog ceases the mouthy behavior, reward them with attention such as petting, treats, play with a toy, or verbal praise.

Tip 3: If your dog continues mouthing you, calmly leave the room and end the interaction.

How to Teach Your Dog Not to Mouth or Nip

Activity #1: Petting

Step 1. Gently pet your dog.

Step 2. If your dog puts their mouth on you at all, immediately stop petting them.

Step 3. Wait at least 30 seconds before petting your dog again.

Training tip: End this exercise in five repetitions or less. If your dog continues mouthing or nipping, it means they need a better outlet for their energy! Incorporate a variety of [Everyday Enrichment Activities](#) to help deplete your dog's energy reserves.

Activity #2: Play with a toy

Step 1. Engage your dog in play with a toy.

Step 2. If their teeth make contact with your skin, immediately end the game. You may stand up, or even walk out of the room. Do not take the toy away or scold them.

Step 3. Wait 30 seconds or more before resuming play.

For more resources, check out <https://sfhumanesociety.org/behavior-library/>