



# Ultimate Guide to **PUPPY BITING**



# Why do puppies bite?



- Puppies go through a developmental stage where they use their mouths and teeth to explore their environment, commonly referred to as "puppy biting".
- This process kicks into high gear around the age of 6 weeks, when puppy teeth have fully erupted, and continues through the loss of puppy teeth and the growth of adult teeth, around 6 months of age.
- During this time period, puppies will chew on and bite into almost anything they encounter in their environment, including plastic, wooden, or fabric objects, as well as people and other animals.

# Puppy biting is normal...but it hurts!

Puppy biting is a normal, developmental behavior in dogs, and though it hurts and sometimes can even draw blood, your puppy is not being aggressive or “vicious”. Puppy biting serves as the mechanism for learning “bite inhibition” (how hard to bite when playing), for assisting the process of teething, and for play fighting between littermates.



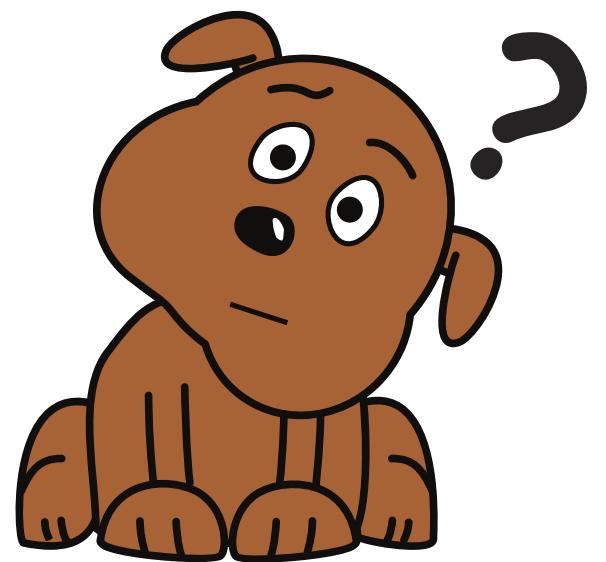
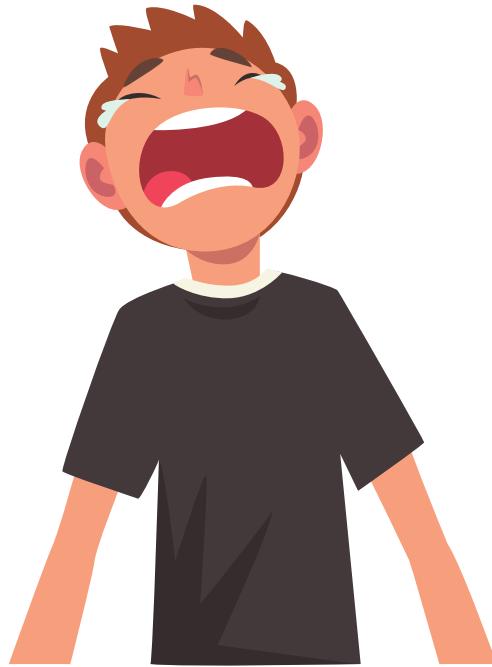
# So...what can we do about it?



- The good news is that puppy biting is temporary, and as long as you respond to it in a positive way, your puppy will outgrow this behavior once he has gotten all of his adult teeth.
- Read on to find out some important DOs and DON'Ts for puppy biting.

# DON'T:

- Use your voice or hands to discourage puppy biting.



It's an instinctive reaction to scold, push away, or physically "correct" or punish this behavior. Unfortunately, doing so is not only ineffective, it often makes the problem worse! Puppies often perceive pushing or yelling as an invitation to rough play. Even if your puppy temporarily stops biting when you raise your voice or otherwise intimidate him, this doesn't teach your puppy what he should do instead. Yelling, spanking, alpha rolling, or other punitive measures will damage your relationship with your puppy, and lead to stress related behaviors.

# DON'T: Leave children unsupervised around puppies (or adult dogs).



- Young children are prime targets for puppy biting. Their hands are within easy reach for a puppy, and they run, wave their arms, and make high pitched sounds, all of which stimulate chasing and biting behaviors in puppies. Therefore, young children and puppies should ALWAYS be directly supervised by an adult with knowledge of dog behavior.
- Teach children the proper way to behave around puppies and dogs, including not putting their face in the dog's face, not following a dog that is trying to move away or escape, and trying to move and speak in a calm way.
- If puppy biting is occurring, or children are afraid, keep your puppy on leash with you, so children can stay out of harm's way.

# DON'T: Pet your puppy when she is energetic or playful.

Young puppies are hyper sensitive to touch, so sometimes even calm petting can stimulate biting behavior. As much as we may want to cuddle puppies, sometimes interacting with them with toys is better than trying to pet or snuggle with them. Watch your puppy to see if they are in the mood for snuggling, or if they are in the mood for playtime. This hyper sensitivity gradually declines in most dogs as they grow into older puppies.



# DO:



- Have lots of toys for puppy to play with and chew on, especially tug toys. Try to have one of these in your hands or within easy reach at ALL times as you move around your home or yard, so you can offer the toy as an appropriate outlet for biting behavior.
- Provide several periods of active playtime each day, when your puppy can get her energy out in a productive way. This means engaging with your puppy in an activity such as fetch or tug-of-war, for 15 - 30 minutes at a time. The play session should end when you notice your puppy starting to be less active and more calm.

# DO:

- Take your puppy out into the world to experience new smells, sights, sounds, and environments. Why does this help with biting? Because experiencing new things helps burn puppy energy!
- Use a stroller or wagon to keep your pup safe from germs before he is fully vaccinated, and pay close attention to his body language, to make sure he is comfortable with any interactions with new people or things.



# DO:

- Start daily walks when your puppy has had the full series of puppy shots (or a minimum of two Distemper/Parvo vaccines). Start with just 5 minutes per walk, and work up to 15-20 minutes.
- Use a comfort harness and a six or ten foot leash (retractable leashes are unsafe and teach dogs to pull on leash).
- Take kibble and treats and reward your puppy frequently when she is walking without pulling.



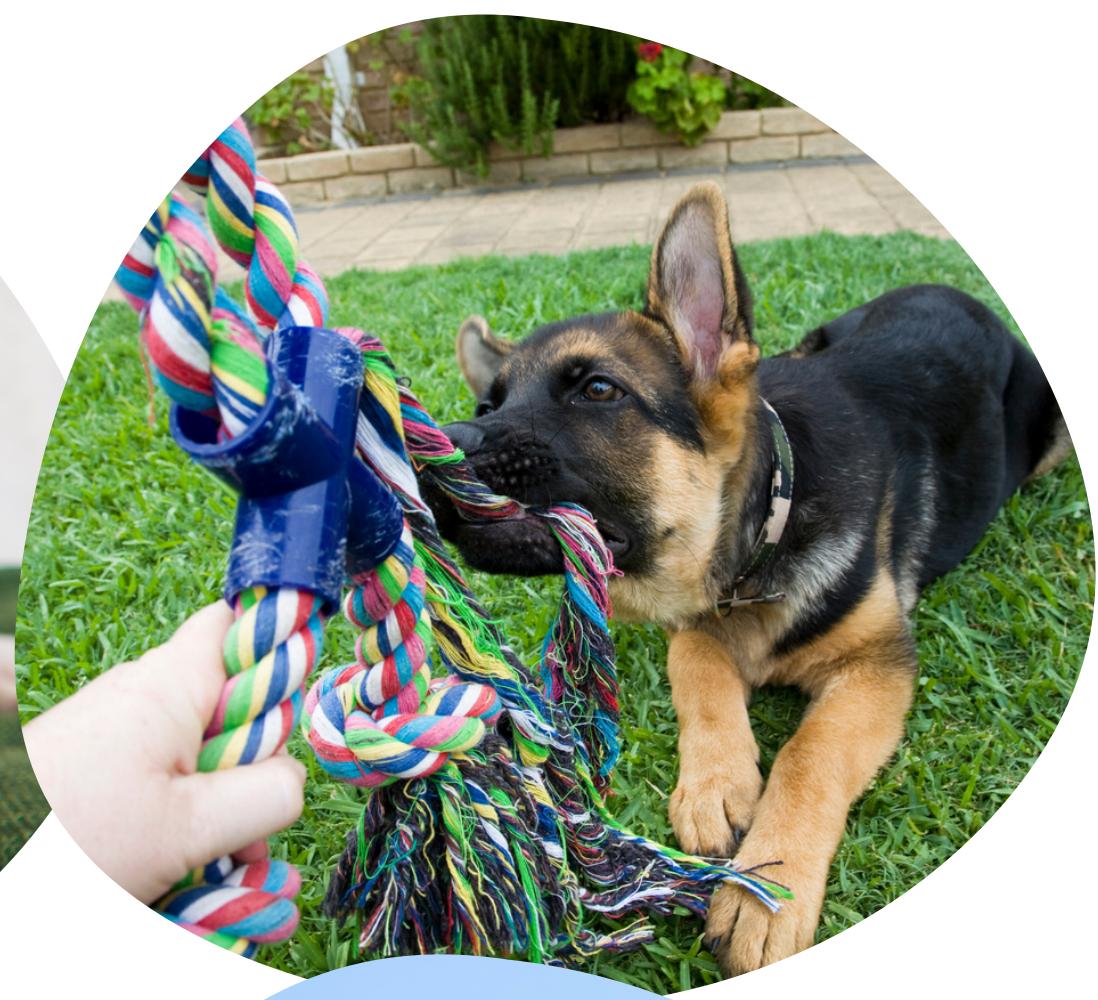
# DO:

- Keep containers of kibble or treats around all areas of your home, so you can easily and quickly reward your puppy when he's NOT biting.
- Toss treats on the floor when your puppy is acting calm, or offer a tug toy if your puppy looks energetic.



# DO:

- Have a variety of toys, such as tennis balls, squeaky balls, knotted rope tugs, feeder toys such as Kongs, and fabric or rubber frisbees.
- Rotate toys once per week so your puppy doesn't get bored with any particular toys.



# DO:

- Provide highly digestible puppy chew treats, such as the products shown here. Most veterinarians do not recommend giving rawhide, real bone, or antler, as they can be choking or puncture hazards.
- 1 - 2 chew treats given per day will help alleviate your puppy's teething symptoms. This will help cut down on puppy biting and chewing, as well as provide mental enrichment.



# DO:

- Make frozen "Puppy Pacifiers" to provide mental enrichment and an outlet for teething and chewing:
- Stuff slow feeder toys like these with one or more of the following and freeze:
  - High quality canned puppy food
  - High quality dry puppy food
  - Canned pumpkin
- Give 1 - 2 times per day to help your puppy relax, or feed regular meals this way.



Puppy Kong



WestPaw Toppl



Canned puppy food



WestPaw Qwizl

# DO:

- Feed dry food out of food dispensing balls as a more mentally enriching alternative to feeding out of a bowl.
- Mentally enriching products like these will keep your active puppy busy, so they will be less likely to engage in puppy biting behavior.

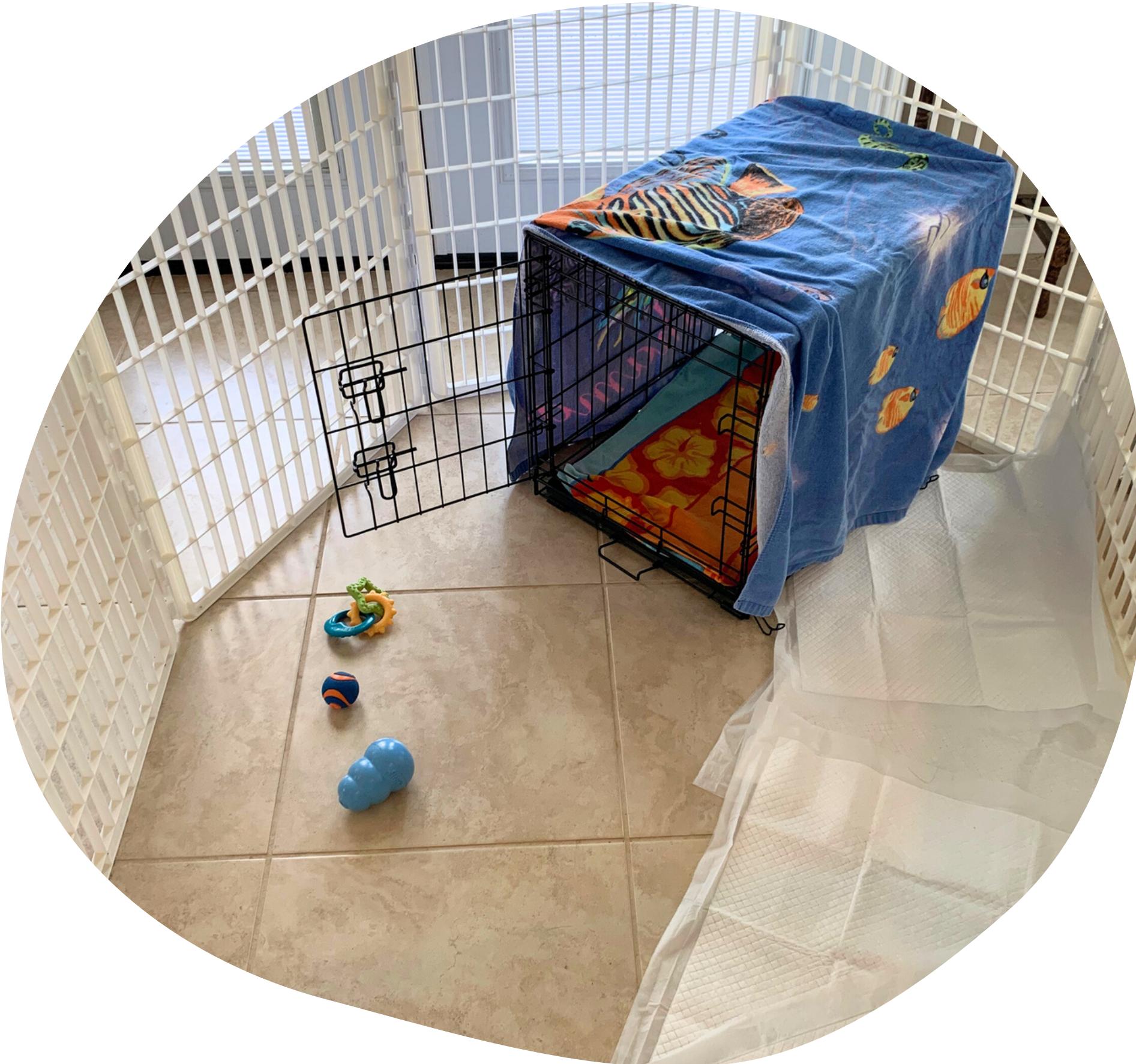


Planet Dog  
Orbee-Tuff  
Mazee Ball



Starmark Treat  
Dispensing Ball

# DO:



- Provide a puppy safe space, where your puppy can rest, play, and use potty pads when you cannot supervise them directly, or when you have to be gone for more than two hours (a crate should only be used for sleeping overnight or for a max of two hours during the day).
- This space can be also be used as a last resort if you have tried re-directing your puppy onto toys, and puppy is having a hard time not biting. Put your puppy into this space to calm down for a minute with a chew treat.
- This space **SHOULD NOT** be used as a punishment.

# TO SUMMARIZE:

- Puppy biting is a challenging behavior to deal with, but it is only temporary, and is the worst between 10 and 16 weeks.
- If you provide for all of your puppy's mental and physical needs, and reward your puppy when he is doing the right thing, puppy biting will be minimal.
- Use a puppy safe space when you cannot directly engage with your puppy, and if you and puppy need a moment of separation to calm down.
- If you are at your wit's end with puppy biting, get help from certified training and behavior professionals who use positive reinforcement methods.

Questions?



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Comments?



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