



## Discouraging Biting in Kittens

*Cats are natural predators, so some of their natural instincts are to pounce, and bite! This is natural, but if they aren't trained properly NOT to engage in these behaviors with hands and feet/humans, they can cause pain and more serious injuries as they grow older. Remember that kittens are still learning and exploring, so patience, consistency, and positive reinforcement are key. While it is in their nature, getting them to let these instincts out on the appropriate targets (toys) is the key to redirection. Please read below for steps to prevent biting and reframe your kitty's instincts into safe ways to play:*

**Appropriate Play:** Kittens enjoy “catching” their prey, so teach them that their prey is the toy and NEVER wiggle your fingers/tickle their bellies etc to get them going. Instead, move a toy in a stimulating and engaging way to encourage them to stalk, chase, pounce, then catch their prey. Once your kitty catches their toy, let them bite at it for a minute to “kill” it before moving it again! When playtime has ended, ALWAYS reward the kitten with a treat. This recreates the experience of catching prey and eating after their kill and will help keep your kitty mentally satisfied and reinforce the toy as the object to bite, NOT the human! It also reinforces this positive behavior over time.

**Include Variety and Play Daily:** Make sure your kitten has a variety of different types of toys to stimulate their mind, such as tunnels, crinkly balls, wand toys, and plush toys. This ensures they won't get bored with the same toy over and over. Make sure to actively play with your kitten multiple times throughout the day. If you leave them to their own devices, they will not play on their own in the same way that simulates a hunt, and your hands and feet will become the next moving targets.

**Redirect Their Attention:** When your kitten starts to bite, redirect their attention to an appropriate toy. Interactive toys they can pounce on and get energy out work well, like wands. This helps shift their focus from your hand or body to a more suitable target. Use a firm “No” and always follow up the “no” with an equally exciting “yes” (the toy). Punishing a kitten will not teach them this boundary, but continual redirection will get them to associate how to properly let their energy out over time. The more they can let their natural urges out in an appropriate way, the less they will be looking to fulfill that need in other places.