



## Mouthiness

*Mouthiness in dogs refers to a behavior where a dog uses its mouth to interact with people or objects. This behavior can be seen in puppies, especially during teething, and it can also manifest in older dogs for various reasons including as an outlet of excitement and energy. While it's a natural part of a dog's behavior, it's essential to manage and train against excessive or unwanted mouthiness.*

**Provide Appropriate Chewing Outlets:** Dogs have a natural instinct to chew. Provide them with appropriate toys and chews to satisfy this need. Encourage the use of chew toys and interactive puzzle feeders to keep them occupied.

**Teach Bite Inhibition:** Bite inhibition is a crucial skill for dogs to learn. Puppies often learn this from their littermates, but it's essential for owners to reinforce it. When your dog mouths you too hard, yelp or say "ouch" to signal pain, then withdraw your attention briefly. This teaches them to be more gentle with their mouths.

**Redirect Behavior:** If your dog starts to mouth you or others, redirect their attention to a toy or treat. This helps them understand that using their mouth on people is not acceptable.

**Use Positive Reinforcement:** Reward your dog when they exhibit good behavior. Praise and treat them when they use their mouth gently and appropriately, like when playing with toys. When they are not being gentle or appropriate, disengage play and walk away.

**Breaks:** If your dog becomes overly mouthy during play or interactions, use breaks as a consequence. Remove yourself or the dog from the situation briefly, then resume play when your dog has calmed down.

**Avoid Rough Play:** While play is important for a dog's physical and mental well-being, rough play can encourage mouthiness. Avoid roughhousing that encourages your dog to use their mouth aggressively.

**Provide Training:** Enroll your dog in obedience training classes or work with a professional dog trainer to reinforce appropriate behavior and control mouthiness.

**Be Consistent:** Consistency in training is crucial. All family members and anyone who interacts with the dog should use the same approach to address mouthiness.

**Patience:** Be patient and understand that addressing mouthiness takes time, especially with puppies. Avoid punishment, as it can lead to fear and aggression.

**Consult a Professional:** If your dog's mouthiness is excessive or difficult to manage, consult with a professional dog trainer or behaviorist for specialized guidance.