

## Dog Biting During Play

**Some puppies bite when they get too excited.**

*By September Morn*

**Q:** We recently adopted an 11-week-old Labrador Retriever-American Pit Bull Terrier mix named Cleo. She responds well to me and my husband; she follows us, on and off leash, and will play bow to us. She has learned and responds to Sit, Down, Leave It and Off.

She has several toys -- rawhides, a small tennis ball and some fabric she keeps in her mouth when she seems to be teething. We have a large fenced backyard in which we let her run off steam or play with our two other dogs.

I know puppies bite when playing -- but when she's overly excited and I try to stop her, she will bite my arms. I use commands to stop her first, and then I calmly and assertively put her in her crate until she calms down.

I've tried laying her on her side or her back when she's in her biting mode. Her heart and breathing is usually racing then and I want to try to calm her down, but this seems to make it worse. Again, at this time I put her in her crate for a timeout. Is this the right thing to do? What alternatives do I have?

**A:** It sounds like your pup is mainly biting when she's over-stimulated, so be proactive and start calming her before she reaches meltdown. Tell her to sit or lie down before she's too excited to respond.

Often pups go into that wild, "bitey" mode when they're tired. A short timeout in her crate when she gets over-stimulated and nippy won't hurt your pup, and it will give her a chance to simmer down and take a needed rest.

If your pup gets a little mouthy in play sometimes, try focusing her teeth on her fabric toy, encouraging her to bite that instead of your arms and clothing. Also teach her the "Go Wild and Freeze" game, which is a great way to build an off switch for overexcitement. To play the game, wave your arms, make happy sounds, and hop, skip or jump around. Before your pup gets overexcited, stop, stand tall, and tell her to sit. Give her a small tasty treat when she does. Then start acting playful again. Stop, ask her to sit, give a treat, etc.

By playing this game, your pup will learn a reliable and prompt response to the Sit cue, even when she's approaching overexcitement. Once she learns this, you'll be able to stop her from going over the edge by simply standing tall and telling her to sit.