

Puppy Has Biting and Potty Problems

Teach him non-biting games but don't expect much in the way of housetraining.

By September Morn

Q. We bought an 8-week-old puppy last week. He wants to play and bark and whine all the time and I am facing serious problems with his biting. His canines are growing and he is badly biting our hands. How can I make him stop doing that? I also need help stopping the puppy from peeing everywhere on the carpet. How should I train him to pee only where he should?

A. Most puppies that age do play biting games with their littermates and other dogs, and until they learn otherwise they'll also try to play that way with people. Those needle-sharp puppy teeth can hurt our furless human skin, so it's important to teach him games that don't involve biting hands or clothing. To do this, everyone in the family needs to know that it's not okay to intentionally play mouth-on-hand games with your puppy.

Play with a toy with him, and let him bite and tug on the toy instead of your hands or clothing. If he let's go of the toy and tries to grab your hand, stop moving. It might be difficult to make yourself do that, but the more you move and try to pull away the harder most puppies will bite down, and that will hurt. Wiggle the toy to make it interesting and encourage the pup to grab it instead of your hand.

If he grabs the toy, praise him and continue the game. But if he lets go of it and grabs you again, end the game. Cross your arms and walk away, leaving him there by himself for one to five minutes. A baby gate in the doorway will help, as that will prevent your pup from following you when you leave the room. After a few minutes, calmly go back and talk quietly to him. Give him the toy to play with, but keep the game mild. Most pups start nipping and biting when they get over-excited. Any biting during play earns the puppy an immediate one to five-minute timeout (you leave him).

As for housetraining, 8 weeks is very young to expect much success yet. At that age, his muscles and bladder are still developing and he hasn't got much control over his urination. Almost as soon as your pup feels the urge to pee, he'll only have a few seconds to get to an approved spot. Until he gets a few weeks older and can control his elimination a little better, keep him out of carpeted areas when you're not watching him.

Learn to notice the signs that mean he needs to potty. Some of those signs include stopping suddenly in play, starting to circle, sniffing a spot on the floor, walking a few feet away and stopping, going around a corner, or behind a large piece of furniture. Pups generally need to pee immediately after waking, eating, drinking, being excited, and playing. At these times he may not give much warning before he pees, so take your puppy to an approved potty area at these times, and praise him calmly for doing his business in the right place.