

JOHN WADE



PUPPY MOUTHING, NIPPING & BITING



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PUPPY MOUTHING, NIPPING & BITING

The number one complaint most puppy owners have is puppy mouthing, nipping and biting. Ironically, the number one reason for this problem is the misinformation disseminated by well-meaning but poorly trained dog trainers and ill-informed veterinarians, vet techs, rescues etc.

Almost every bit of information companion dog owners receive on the topic of puppy mouthing nipping and biting is wrong, rarely works and ironically lays the groundwork for future difficulties with the dog.

Hint: *When their very sharp teeth sprout, mother dogs with multiple puppies do not have unwanted mouthing, nipping or biting problems for more than a day. She loves her puppies no less than you love yours and each puppy ends the day with as much self-self-esteem as it began.*

PUPPY MOUTHING, NIPPING & BITING

A Real Life Example Of Most Common BUT Bad Advice

I was once given a case study to review by an 'All Positive/Purely Positive/Force-Free' dog trainer intended for use to prove her worth in a dog trainers certification process. The dog was a Golden Retriever around ten weeks of age and the dog owner a single woman. The woman was covered in scabs from the puppy mouthing nipping and biting, and her clothing was very much paying the price as well.



When initial recommendations regarding ignoring the bad behavior and redirecting with a toy didn't impact the behavior the trainer recommended what has now become the most common advice.

1. Ignore the puppy (good luck with that)
2. Reward the puppy for not mouthing nipping and biting with a treat
3. Redirect the puppy mouthing (giving the dog a toy instead).
4. If this fails, recommendations were:
 - a) Folding one's arms to one's chest

- b) Standing
- c) Turning one's back
- d) Crying out in feigned or not so feigned pain
- e) Putting the puppy in a timeout

The trainer was quite pleased that after four weeks the puppy's mouthing, nipping and biting had been (in her words) "extinguished."

I had and have for any dog trainer recommending these strategies two questions.

1. In a real-world context, if the puppy's mouthing, nipping and biting had been directed towards its mother how long would it have taken to "extinguish" the behavior? 30 days? Or, a total of 30 seconds? Most mother dogs will put up with a lot, but when they've had enough, every pup in the litter knows. I have to wonder, have these trainers never seen a mother dog "inform" her pups that their nursing days are over?

2. If the dog's owner, in this case, had one or more young children what are the chances that the dog would have ended up returned to the breeder or



surrendered to a shelter? This is a very real byproduct of 'All Positive/Purely Positive/Force-Free' companion dog training.

Philosophy ≠ Not Science

This misinformation is found almost everywhere online. It is taught to dog trainers in seminars, and even the veterinary and vet tech community have fallen victims.

The source of this advice is dog trainers that have been convince by someone that 'All Positive/Purely Positive/Force-Free' is normal and effective outside of laboratory controlled settings.

The popularity of this approach is due to its marketability, not it's validity. It's certainly not science.

The two primary inaccurate claims that cause the most problems

concerning puppy mouthing, nipping and biting:

1. 'All Positive/Purely Positive/Force-Free' is science. (False)
2. Anything other than 'All Positive/Purely Positive/Force-Free' = Cruel and Unnatural (False)

1. 'All Positive/Purely Positive/Force-Free' is not science.

The science behind 'All Positive/Purely Positive/Force-Free' approach was laboratory-based as opposed to field based. Think rats in a laboratory

maze or perhaps more relatable, Orcas in the isolation of aquarium confinement. Now think of Orcas in the open ocean or rats in the barn. In the image to the left, you will find me teaching scent detection to a dog using 'All Positive/Purely Positive/Force-Free' in a highly controlled setting. This is the type of environment that this methodology was created and is intended.



As has been repeatedly proven once the distracting chaos that is real life is introduced the impact of this sort of training has limited influence. Even in the aquarium environment, after years of training, commitment and skill level of full-time trainers the show comes to an end if something like a pelican decides to land in the water. Now think in terms of walking your dog and the appearance of a squirrel.

The companion dog owner's world is one of neighborhood walks with distractions like other dogs, squirrels, bicycles, skateboards, etc. Even interesting smells can prove a challenge. Inside the home, there are doorbells, guest arrivals, and departures, often rambunctious children. Combine that with the reality that the average companion dog owner has only so much of themselves left over at the end of each day. Whereas most of the proponents of this ideology often have lives that revolve solely around dogs and you begin to get a sense as to why I refer to the "science" claim as at best a misleading half-truth.

2. If training is not 'All Positive/Purely Positive/Force-Free' then it is 'Might Is Right/Pain/Force/Negative/Cruelty' based - 100% False

Legitimate companion dog training is based on the same template used by all higher order social species, like dogs, wolves, apes and human beings. It is a result of evolutionary biology which supports neither 'All Positive/Purely Positive/Force-Free' or 'Might Is Right'. There are no examples to be found of either anywhere in the context of "child" rearing. What is universally found are parent/child (teacher/student) relationships where the parent/teacher uses predominantly encouragement and negative tone and body language to make their point. It works, that's why every higher-order social species uses it as opposed to 'All Positive/Purely Positive/Force-Free' or 'Might Is Right.'

In spite of claims to the contrary and at the risk of you growing tired of me repeating; 'All Positive/Purely Positive/Force-Free' has no science to support its use in non-highly controlled environments. Even if it were to prove eventually effective,

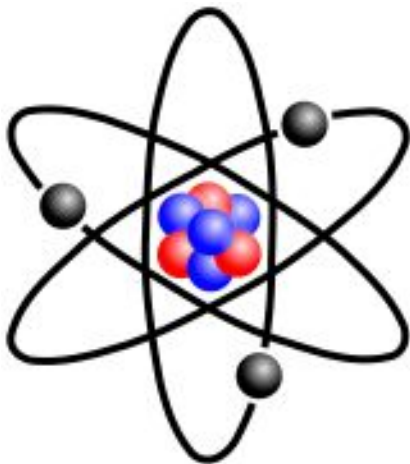


imagine the reality of a household similar to the image on the right and being restricted to ignoring bad behavior or any of the 'All Positive/Purely Positive/Force-Free' recommendations listed earlier.

Even the "timeout" recommendation isn't reasonable. If looked at from an ethology perspective has no real equivalent in the dog behavior. If

mother dogs, wolves, coyotes put one of their young in a timeout, they'd come back to find blood, bones, and fur.

Suffice it to say that **ALL OF THESE SUGGESTIONS ARE WRONG, WRONG, WRONG!**



This approach if we were to stick to the actual science it draws from requires a controlled environment, heaps of time and impeccable timing. None of which are typically at the disposal of the average companion dog owner or mother dog for that matter which is why evolution went another route no doubt.

For what it's worth, I have been unable to find a single scientific paper that supports the idea of 'All Positive/Purely Positive/Force-Free' approach to teaching and learning in real-world environments. More importantly, I have also been unable to find an 'All Positive/Purely Positive/Force-Free' dog trainer that can show me research that supports 'All Positive/Purely Positive/Force-Free' teaching and learning in real-world environments. The reason - none exists.

However, there are reams of scientific papers supporting the approach that evolution has universally selected as the best means for equipping youngsters with real-world, life skills. That approach in a nutshell essentially boils down to almost always positive with a dash of consequence added when required from someone perceived to be an authority figure known to love the subject. Real Science

The Teething Myth

Do puppies teethe? Yes. Do they teethe on their mothers? As they're not masochistic, not more than once or twice. Teething is a reason, not an excuse, and in any event, not a primary reason.

To Solve This It's Important To Know Why Puppies Mouth/Nip/Bite

In order to understand why the 'All Positive/Purely Positive/Force-Free' approach to "extinguishing" puppy mouthing nipping and biting is all wrong and counterproductive, even dangerous (as it sets a dog up to not listen to their owner) we need to look at it not from the philosophy of 'All Positive/Purely Positive/



Force-Free' dog trainers but of some actual science.

Let's start with some evolutionary biology. Why is it that puppies get a set of razor-sharp teeth coming in around the time they become reasonably mobile which by no

coincidence is followed by being informed by their mothers that nursing is over? They keep them for only a few months until they are replaced by adult teeth. Why sharp and why then? Nothing in their natural diet seems

to suggest the need for tiny daggers. When they start eating solids, those "solids" are pre-consumed, partially digested and regurgitated for consumption.

Nature has a purpose for everything. Those teeth are razors so that when they interact with their mouths with their mother and litter-mates, they can't fail but to get a reaction. The feedback they receive will in a general sense contribute to their learning to inhibit the vigor with which they use their mouths (bite inhibition).

In a much more direct sense, it adds to their education about the hierarchy between themselves and their mother and between themselves and their littermate.

Litter-mates

Plays is a means of testing. In fact I think it's far more accurate and useful to describe puppies as testing each other than playing with each other. The same goes when they're 'playing' with their owners via the 'mouthing, nipping and biting game.'

Grab a littermate too hard, and one of three possible lessons are learned. The puppy on the receiving end will:

1. Provide an equal to or greater than response - "If you want to interact with me, don't be so rough because it hurts.



2. A Tsunami response - "You hurt me, I will hurt you more because I am the king/queen of this litter."
3. Lastly the response that so many misguided dog trainers, veterinarians, vet techs and rescues are propagating, "Ouch! That hurt, I will from here on in, do whatever you say."

Interactions between litter-mates influence future nursing position, possession of a treat or a toy, etc. You can call it 'play', but there's some very serious relationship hierarchy testing occurring. This early testing is what contributes greatly to avoiding as much serious conflict as possible when down the road when they are no longer puppies and are capable of inflicting serious damage upon each other.

Puppy mouthing, nipping, and biting is part of a natural biological mechanism that helps a puppy learn who is the teacher and who is the student.

Their Own Mothers

Guess what sort of response they receive from their mothers when those mini razor blades latch onto a nipple? I assure you mother dogs don't sit down and talk about their feelings and encourage the puppy to "Use your words next time." It is, in fact, the first experience that every dog has in its life with an aggressive tone and body language and sometimes physical discipline.

The Puppy's Owner(s)

The 'All Positive/Purely Positive/Force-Free' dog training approach to puppy mouthing nipping and biting sets companion dog owners up to have their puppies believe that hierarchically speaking - their owners are the ones that should be listening to them.



It's also worth mentioning, what the case study trainer mentioned above attributed to successfully extinguishing after 30 days was not evidencing that the approach worked.

Experienced trainers know that almost all puppies outgrow the

serious mouthing, nipping and biting stage in that general timeline (30 days) as typically the mission as to who's in charge has been accomplished.

In the case of puppies "trained" in the 'All Positive/Purely Positive/Force-Free' way, they've learned who is the teacher (them) and who is the student (their owners) and as a result real-world current and future obedience becomes much harder for the companion dog owners to teach.

If you ever wonder why 'All Positive/Purely Positive/Force-Free' dog trainers are so heavily invest in "buying" a dog's attention with treats to get them to do anything you now know. No higher order social species uses this disastrous construct to teach any skills let alone life-skills.

If you think it's
expensive to hire a
professional, wait until
you hire an amateur.

Without the natural and relatable to both puppy and companion dog owner, authority of a parent or a teacher, the 'All Positive/Purely Positive/Force-Free' becomes at best a room-mate or a substitute teacher (and we know how that almost always ended in our own elementary and high school years) have nothing left then bribery. Although some, desperate and frustrated, unfortunately resort to 'Might Is Right' training.

It's worth noting that this bribery approach is more akin to that of the advantage of a dealer over an addict. Not exactly tapping into the best part of either a companion dog or companion dog owner.

As might be expected, in many cases, 'All Positive/Purely Positive/Force-Free' approach results in excessive stress in both the companion dog and owner. The dog's owner unintentionally leads their dog into believing that the dog is the teacher, and so they butt heads frequently when the dog's owner tries to discourage something in the dog's behavior. Companion dog owners end up feeling like they're working uphill all the time - because they are.

Instead?

So what should you do instead about puppy mouthing nipping and biting?

Naturally, I suggest being highly suspicious of anyone that claims expertise and believes that 'All Positive/Purely Positive/Force-Free' is anything other than ideology. However, I'd be only slightly less suspicious of anyone that claims dog training expertise and yet is willing to tell you what to do for a dog they have never met or at least asked quite a few



questions. This screams amateur, and your dog is too important to risk amateur advice on.

The reality is that some dogs are little Ferrari's on legs and others are minivans. Some dogs have a history that burdens them with significant baggage, others are

blank slates and trouble-free. Some dogs are significantly faster, stronger and more agile than their owners and some are physically very frail. Some dogs for a good reason are thoroughly convinced their owners are nothing more than roommates and it will take some convincing them that they're the teacher. Where others would need therapy if they thought they weren't pleasing.

As you may have noticed, anyone that has ever owned a dog or has an interest in dogs (aka - almost everyone) has an opinion regarding training. People disenchanted with their job selling sneakers at the mall can create a website, print up some business cards call themselves a dog trainer and start training dogs.

Very few dog trainers develop the experience, expertise, and reputation that leads to paying their bills as a dog trainer. Real companion dog trainers know that giving good dog training advice, even just how to go about general obedience as opposed to more severe behavior problems is like realism painting. You have to have all the colors in the palette, and you have to paint with all the collars you need, not just the ones you like, and some dogs require more colors than others. Here are only a few

things that potentially influence how I would advise you regarding puppy mouthing, nipping and biting:

- Genetics
- Bloodlines
- Critical Socialization Period History
- Influencers when unsupervised
- Handling Ability
- Lifestyle
- Dog's perception of current relationship (roommate vs teacher?)

So rather than join the ranks of the amateurs and give you advice for a dog I know nothing about, here are some suggestions on finding the right help for you and your companion dog. My recommendation is to learn a little about the four main approaches to companion dog training before you call around to get some help. A brief overview follows.



Four Companion Dog Training Methods

There are currently four companion dog training methods.

1. All Positive/Purely Positive/Force-Free' companion dog training which is actually ideology disguised as methodology.
2. 'Might Is Right' companion dog training, which often justifies things like pinning a puppy to the ground as "natural" "because mother dogs do it." While not wrong, it's not a "method" mother dogs use and it's not an attitude they embrace. They actually don't do that sort of thing very often.
3. Partially Balanced companion dog training which accepts that a game of 'You're Warm, You're Cold' is bloody hard if the person giving the hints will only use one or the other. However, it can be too rigid if it doesn't factor in the other variables that influence teaching and learning.
4. Fully Balanced Companion Dog Training is more akin to raising a child. It's positive in approach almost all the time with the odd, I'm not asking you, I'm telling you, thrown in. However, there are a ton of things that influence approach and outcome and the more you take into consideration the better your results.

Group vs In-Home

1. **Group** - most familiar but not the most productive. Often more of an expense than an investment.
2. **In-Home** - provides fewer distractions and those distraction that do exist are those that the companion dog owner has to contend with on a day to day basis (as opposed to a half a dozen strange dogs once a week). There is far less stress in-home, and as a result, both owner and dog take in and retain more. The entire household is more easily involved. The pace is dictated by the dog and the owner rather than strange dogs and owners.



For more reading on companion dog training pros and cons see: [What Are The Different \(and best\) Companion Puppy and Dog Training Methods - A Brief Pros & Cons Guide for Puppy & Dog Owners Interested In Saving Time & Money](#)

Client Section

Puppy Mouthing, Nipping, Biting Checklist

Occasionally clients will have “one of those puppies”. A little more of a Ferrari than a mini-van and they continue to struggle with puppy mouthing, nipping and biting longer than they should have to. For those clients I put together the following review which if you also have continued to have problems with jumping and have read that review, you will find multiple sections which you may feel it’s okay to skip over as there’s crossover. Perhaps, but a little repetition never hurts.

When The 'Rule of Three' Isn't Working

The By Far Most Common Reason is that the way you are using the leash to get your puppy's attention before you use your tone and body language is being perceived as playful as opposed you really mean business and want his or her attention in no uncertain terms.

You do not want to use the leash/collar/harness as a means to correct your puppy. You want to use the leash/collar/harness combination as a means to acquire your dog's attention so you can begin a short lesson conveyed via tone and body language. However, if your efforts are resulting in an escalation it's likely because the puppy thinks you're playing, you respond with slightly more leash vigor, the puppy winds up a bit more, you get slightly more serious . . .

You may also be using the leash in a manner that works for all other behaviors and are wondering why not with the mouthing. Remember, mouthing is as much a test as it is play. The puppy is looking for answers. Crystal clear answers. It's not uncommon that if you're early into your training, particularly from the perspective of shifting the puppy from a current belief that you two are roommates or worse over to perceiving you as the teacher your puppy is also a little frustrated that you're changing an established relationship. It gets easier, much faster, IF, you are doing all the other teacher/student exercises as well.

Leash And Collar/Harness As A Means Of Acquiring Attention Review

Imagine the vigor for which use the leash and collar (or harness for the frailer dogs) for getting your dogs attention has a scale of 1 - 10. One

being no need for the leash and collar because the dog is already paying attention and ten representing the genie is not going back in the bottle no matter what we do, or in other words, the dog is totally out of control.

If your dog's distraction level is at a two, respond with a three, maybe even a four. If your dog's distraction level is at a four, react with a six or perhaps even a seven. However, if your dog's distraction level is at a seven, eight, nine or ten STOP and review the following once again:

1. Have I been doing the other things we learned to do as frequent reminders throughout the day as to who is the teacher and who is the student?
2. Is the level my dog is at because of insufficient exercise and mental stimulation on the day in question?
3. When was the last time my puppy ate?
4. Does my puppy need to go to the bathroom?
5. Does what I'm asking of the dog need to be broken down into smaller increments so your dog can more easily understand?
6. Do you need a different collar or harness?

If you're unsure, call me. Ideally, after you've sent some videos showing examples.

Taking It Up A Notch

Remember when we discussed the 'Might Is Right' approach to dog training and mentioned that it's falsely based on beliefs related to how a mother dog will behave toward a stubbornly wayward puppy?

It's true that mother dogs don't sit their pups down and encourage them to use their words and express their feelings? Those levels only kick in when she's repeatedly ignored or when a puppy fails to use its mouth in an inhibited way on her sensitive body parts. Then without regard for the self-esteem of the pup in question, she responds with a ferocious (seeming) and for the puppy, unexpected response. It may be no more than a display of tone and toothy body language, but it also can include in a reasonable level of physical correction (pinning, nipping) that leaves no doubt in a puppy's mind that paying attention is important and that had best be sure their mother isn't just asking them, but instead might be telling them.

If your pup isn't connecting the dots concerning inappropriate use of his or her mouth, start embracing a more Tsunami like response. (Always using the 'rule of three.')

If your dog's mouthing, nipping, and biting level starts at a two, respond with a four. (Always use the 'rule of three.')

If your dog's mouthing, nipping or biting level starts at (as opposed to has escalates to) a four, respond with a six or maybe even a seven. (Always use the 'rule of three.')

However, once again, if your dog's distraction level is at a seven, eight, nine or ten, STOP and refer to the five points listed just above. Failing that do the following:

What To Do When The 'Rule of Three' Isn't Working

1. Stop
2. Crate your puppy or separate yourselves in some manner for 10 to 20 minutes.

3. Set your phone or computer or better get someone ready to video.
4. Return to whatever activity prompted the mouthing, do what you were doing that didn't produce results.
5. Send my that video via www.wetransfer.com to this email address, john@askthedogguy.com

Factors That Will Influence Outcome

1. Relationship

The relationship between the dog and the owner is more than a roommate. It's hard to teach when the connection isn't an established authentic teacher/student. Just ask a substitute teacher. Attempts to teach a dog that still sees their owner as a roommate will not only have no impact it can make things worse. If you have doubt as to whether your dog currently sees you as a loving teacher as opposed to a great roommate let's chat first. (john@askthedogguy.com or 519-457-9559)

2. Triggering Is Better Than Waiting

Don't just wait for mouthing, nipping or biting to happen. It's far easier on a dog (and the owner) for the owner to trigger a mouthing, nipping or biting rather than waiting to be mouthed, nipped or bitten.

We don't wait for a problem or an incident when teaching manners and skills to children. "What do you do when a stranger in a car asks you to get in?" "Look both ways before . . ." "Say please and thank you." etc.

If you just wait for your dog to mouth, nip or bite:

1. It's not always convenient.
2. The timing is less accurate.
3. There aren't usually enough opportunities to get the message across.
4. It's harder for your dog to understand. (See below)

It's Harder For Your Dog To Understand

You have to wait until after a dog has erred and the error has been corrected to reward a dog with a "Good Boy/Girl!" It usually plays out like this, the dog mouths, nips or bites, and the dog's owner says, "No!", followed by a "Good Boy/Girl!".

This is usually because you are reacting as opposed to triggering. However, when you're triggering the behavior as opposed to being caught off guard you can make it far easier for your dog to understand what's right and what's not, in your game of you're warm/you're cold by rewarding your dog with your voice and body language just before you trigger the mouthing, nipping or biting and switch to the cold version of your tone and body language. More on that in a moment.

3. Slow Is Fast

You don't teach children to do geometry at the gateway of Disneyland so don't start teaching your dog to stop mouthing, nipping or biting by beginning with arriving guests. Break the discouraging of mouthing, nipping or biting into smaller steps, and you will learn that what may seem slower is actually far faster and easier on all involved in the long run.

Start to teach your dog not to mouth, nip or bite:

1. Adult members of the household first.
2. The balance of household members second.
3. Friends and outside family third.

4. Strangers, fourth.

4. Context Is Very Important

For the short-term, particularly if it's a safety concern if your dog has to be exposed to other mouthing, nipping or biting targets (# 2 - 3 above) use the leash or a crate to keep them separated.

There are a few reasons for this but a fundamental reason it's always critical to consider context from a dog's perspective. We want to train in such a way that it becomes clear to your dog that:

1. Your dog isn't bad. Mouthing, nipping or biting a person without an invitation trigger word (i.e., Cuddles) is bad.
2. Friends, strangers, children, etc aren't bad. Mouthing, nipping or biting on friends, strangers, children, etc is bad.

There's far less risk of a dog mistakenly connecting guests are 'bad' as opposed to mouthing, nipping or biting on guests are bad if you start off by just teaching your dog to not mouth, nip or bite you. If you've been doing your teacher/student exercises, I mention in my seminars, books and in-home training sessions your dog knows or has a pretty good idea who is the teacher and who is the student, understands tone and body language that means, "You're cold!", and "You're warm!" Combine that with the knowledge that he or she is loved and if you teach your dog that mouthing, nipping or biting on you without invitation is a big no-no your dog isn't going to need therapy. He or she just learn not to mouth, nip or bite you. At that point and not before you move on to the next level of stimulus as listed above.

As a result, begin teaching your dog not to mouth, nip or bite initially involving only the adult members of the household perceived by your dog as teachers.

4. 'Rule Of Three'

It's not likely that in his or her own mind your dog thinks he or she is doing something terrible. Your dog doesn't speak English so with only tone and body language to go on it's going to take a little repetition to connect the dots. Each training segment to not mouth, nip or bite is short and to the point, has three quick repetitions and your dog is given a break. Details in a moment but remember if by the third repetition you don't see an improvement and especially if things are getting worse or your dog seems confused, call me.

5. Three Day Rule

The more robust the foundation during the early stages the easier, the more difficult triggers will be, so it's worth being sure you have three honest consecutive days of success in before moving forward.

Therefore, before you escalate the level of complication (you to another family member, guest etc.), shoot for three days in a row of being unable to trigger a mouth, nip or bite in the context of what you chose for your first level of difficulty, and then the next level, and then the next level. It might take a week to get three days in a row. It shouldn't take more than 7 to 10 days. If you're not seeing improvement, call me.

6. Leash and Collar Common Sense

The leash and collar are not tools of correction. You are the teacher, and it is the teacher's tone and body language that will guide your dog.

The leash and collar is a means to interrupt a physical act (mouthing, nipping or biting) and to get a dog's attention if he or she is distracted, not to create a painful experience. They can be used in that manner and pain is indeed one way to learn to stop doing something, but it is also a very crappy way to learn and generally speaking, isn't necessary.

Leashes and collars are almost always used in a 'Might Is Right' manner when any or each of the following is the case:

- The dog owner hasn't first learned how to live with a dog so that their dog has come to understand the owner is the teacher and he or she is the student.

- The dog has come to believe he or she can physically overwhelm the owner.

When the leash is required to interrupt a physical act or to acquire attention, and in the early stages of training it often will be, it is accomplished by a sideways pop on the leash with the level of rigor appropriate to achieve this and nothing more. If you ever think the situation requires anything that might cross the line into causing a dog physical pain or injury - STOP. There is a mistake being made. A step has been missed somewhere. Call me or email me instead.

7. Tone and Body Language

Your dog doesn't speak English so don't worry about what words you use to convey the idea you're not pleased. It's not what you say, it's how you say it. You can just say, "You're warm.", or "You're cold." "Yes," or "No." "Republican," or "Democrat." It doesn't matter, just be clear with your tone and your body language and your dog will understand.

That said, you don't need to stray into the tone and body language that conveys, "BAD DOG!". Embrace overall energy for each lesson that makes it more game-like than life or death.

8. Puppies and Feeding

Type of food and more importantly frequency of feedings can have a significant impact on puppy behavior in general. Some food are far more digestible than others and impact how much beneficial nutrition the puppy is utilizing. Puppies always require more frequent feeding than adult dogs. The younger the dog and the larger the breed impact how

frequent you should be feeding. A puppy on the wrong food and/or a puppy with too much space in-between feedings is going to be far more inclined to mouth, nip or bite in the first place and be much harder to train not to as well as learning anything else in the obedience repertoire.

9. Puppies and Physical and Mental Activity

One of the more obvious signs a puppy isn't getting enough physical and mental stimulation is when they spontaneously madly zoom about. Some refer to this as the "Zoomies". More often than not it's a cry for help. Mouthing, nipping and biting is another.

Puppies test themselves against their littermate through vigorous play for a couple of hours per day. That burns a lot of physical and mental energy. Some puppies need more than others. It's a rare companion dog puppy that enjoys anything similar once in their new homes. If your puppy isn't responding to the no mouthing, nipping and biting training it's possible that you need to look for ways to increase the level of daily and physical activity for a while. It should be in keeping with their abilities as while they rough and tumble quite vigorously with each other, it's not for hours on end. They do so in spurts throughout the day.

Next Be Certain Of The Following

1. Have You Been Using The 'Rule Of 3' Each Time?

It is very common for people to forget how important it is to encourage or discourage a behavior three consecutive times rather than only once. Not just with mouthing, nipping and biting but for all things you should be using the 'Rule of Three'? If you just get a dog's attention with the

leash (if it's required) and use tone and body language to convey, "You're warm, You're cold." Once, is not enough for a dog to connect the dots and you won't see the progress you and your dog are otherwise capable. You may even see things get worse as your dog may become confused and frustrated with you.

2. Do You Really Have The Puppy's Attention? (The Most Common Reason By Far)

Imagine the vigor for which use the leash and collar (or harness for the frailer dogs) for getting your dogs attention has a scale of 1 - 10. One being no need for the leash and collar because your dog is already paying attention and ten representing the genie is not going back in the bottle no matter what we do, or in other words, your dog is totally out of control.

Are you using a starting level that might be more appropriate for a much less intensely focused dog? This will almost always result in a puppy thinking you're playing back. Of course, you're not, you're trying to discourage the behavior, so you respond by using the leash and collar (or harness for the frailer dogs) slightly more vigorously. More often than not the puppy thinks you're really into the activity and also goes up a notch. Then you up the ante a tad, but so does the puppy. The end result can be a dramatic and frustrating escalation. It also can transition the purpose of a leash and collar (or harness for the frailer dogs) from a means of getting a dog's attention to an aversive tool, and we don't want that.

What you read above isn't uncommon at all. In a way, it's a good thing because it means you're trying to be careful to make sure the leash and collar (or harness for the frailer dogs) aren't being used aversively.

If you suspect that the above might be the case BEFORE you do anything give some thought to the following:

1. Have I been doing the other things we learned to do as frequent reminders throughout the day as to who is the teacher and who is the student?
2. Is the level my dog is at because of insufficient exercise and mental stimulation on the day in question?
3. When was the last time my puppy ate?
4. Does my puppy need to go to the bathroom?
5. Does what I'm asking of the dog need to be broken down into smaller increments so your dog can more easily understand?
6. Do you need a different collar or harness?

If you're unsure, call me. Ideally, after you've sent some videos showing examples.

If none of the above apply then move on to the following section.

No Nipping, Mouthing or Biting Training

Before you begin each lesson be sure of the following:

- Your dog isn't overly tired, overly hungry or has excessively pent up energy because he or she hasn't been sufficiently physically active.
- You are in your home where the distractions are more under your control.
- You have the leash in hand, and it's attached to a collar (or harness for physically frail dogs).
- The collar or harness will not slip off.
- The collar provides sufficient leverage to keep your dog from physically overwhelming you.
- The collar provides leverage enough to allow you to interrupt your dog more easily.
- The collar provides leverage so that a pop of the leash is sufficient to get your dog's attention in the calmer context of inside your home.
- You understand that a leash and collar are not for correcting (hurting) a dog. They can be used in that manner and often are. Our goal is to keep your dog from physically overwhelming you, interrupting physical behavior and getting a distracted dog's attention. You correct your dog, not the equipment.
- You're not correcting so much as guiding. It's a game of, "You're warm! You're cold." It is not, "You're cold, You're cold, You're cold."

How To Trigger Mouthing/Nipping

To Make It 'The Flavor Of The Week'

Practice First On The Inanimate

Note: Every time your dog refrains ('Rule of Three') from mouthing, nipping or biting it's alright to offer an appropriate chew toy as you're not rewarding mouthing, nipping or biting but filling a void should your dog legitimately need to chew from a 'teething' perspective.

- Place an item likely to be chewed but not supposed to be chewed in your dog's reach.
- Wave a tea towel.
- Use a dangling leash handle as a temptation.
- Pull a long sock half way off your foot and shake it temptingly
- Wear gloves and tempt your dog with your fingers.
- Tempt your puppy with your fingers.
- Wiggle or twitch your toes in front of the puppy.
- Pretend to do a grooming or start with just a partial.
- Count the toes on one or more of your puppy's feet.
- Practice giving your dog a pill or examining teeth and gums.

Is This How Your Triggered Lessons Look?

Act One Scene One

YOU

Pick up the leash grip at about the midpoint area as opposed to the handle so you can more quickly and easily provide your dog with direction.

Begin to praise your dog using both tone and body language while you're saying something like, "Good boy!" or "Good girl!"

YOUR DOG

Your dog is thinking, "Cool, I'm a good boy or girl!" (And he or she is)

YOU

You trigger the mouthing with one of the suggestions above.

The split second your dog seems interested (much better to catch the idea than the action) use the leash to disrupt the idea/action and get your dog's attention and change to 'you're cold' tone and body language.

YOUR DOG

Your dog is now thinking, "What the heck! What just changed?"

YOU

The moment you notice those thoughts running through your dog's head or even just the moment things are moving, no matter how slightly, from mouthing/nipping to a pause in not doing so or a puzzled or surprised look, you switch back to "Good boy!" or "Good girl!"

Reward even a slight interruption as opposed to waiting for cessation of all 'hostilities'. For example:

- ◆ "Good dog, that's the best 1/1000th 😊 of a second of not mouthing/nipping me!"
- ◆ "Good dog, thanks for at least hesitating before you mouthed/nipped me!"

YOUR DOG

Your dog is likely now thinking, "I'm a good boy or girl again? What just changed?"

YOU

You trigger a episode in the exact same way and again the split second your dog acts on those thoughts or better yet in your estimation your dog even looks like he or she is thinking about mouthing/nipping, again, use the leash to disrupt the behavior and get your dog's attention and change to 'you're cold' tone and body language.

YOUR DOG

Your dog is likely now thinking, "What happened to I'm a good boy or girl? I want to be a good boy or a girl. Wait for a second, I wonder if it has something to do with this mouthing/nipping thing? That's the only change I can see."

YOU

The moment you notice those thoughts running through your dog's head or even just the moment things are moving, no matter how slightly, from mouthing/nipping to not mouthing/nipping you switch back to "Good boy!" or "Good girl!"

YOUR DOG

Your dog is likely now thinking, "Oh thank goodness, I am a good boy or girl? I want to be a good boy or a girl. Wait for a second, I wonder if a good boy or girl has something to do with NOT mouthing/nipping? That's the only change I can see."

YOU

You trigger a final (for a while) third mouthing/nipping episode in the exact same way and again the split second your dog mouths/nips or better yet in your estimation your dog even looks like he or she is thinking about mouthing/nipping, use the leash to disrupt the mouthing/nipping episode and get your dog's attention and change to 'you're cold' tone and body language.

YOUR DOG

Your dog has now either moved somewhere between being slightly suspicious to highly suspicious or with any luck at all, the conclusion that you may be teaching him or her that good dogs don't mouth/nip. "Good dog is going again! I want to be a good boy or a girl. Wait for a second, I wonder if it has something to do with mouthing/nipping? That's the only change I can see."

YOU

You confirm those suspicions the moment your dog, no matter how slightly, has moved from mouthing/nipping to not mouthing/nipping with more enthusiastic expressions of, "Good boy!" or "Good girl!"

End of Scene and Intermission (Take a Break)

Additional Recommendations

Set An Actual Goal

1. Every day I will ... (Add an alarm to your phone.)
2. Review that goal in the morning and at night. (Add an alarm to your phone.)
3. In one week my dog will know not to mouth/nip when I trigger by ... (Add an alarm to your phone.)

Send your goals to me if you want to be harassed with accountability: john@askthedogguy.com

Track Your Progress

I'm providing a PDF that you can use to chart your progress, but you might find it easier to download a goals app for your phone. There are a lot of free ones, and the paid ones aren't that expensive. If you find one that particularly suits, let me know, and I'll let others know.

Start Doing Dress Rehearsals

Rather than wait for your puppy to decide to mouth, nip, or bite you start triggering it yourself as many times in a day, every day as often as you can squeeze it in. Much more comfortable for a puppy to connect the

dots when it forgets itself and mouths, nips or bites to have frequent and fresh "Oh yeah! I wonder if that's what this is about?", memories to draw on.

You can do this in several ways. Just keep it short. Accomplish one of what you find below at a time ('Rule of Three') and give your dog a break.

1. Use a flapping tea towel for the pup to target so you can find the right levels (as mentioned above) for getting the pup's attention. You'll know if the puppy stops on the third of the 'Rule of Three' you've found the correct level. Stop. Try again later.
2. To trigger some mouthing, with one hand on a shortened leash gently do a simulated veterinarian examination.
 - Examine each ear and eye
 - Pretend to apply drops to each ear and eye
 - Open the puppy's mouth and massage gums and simulate putting a pill far enough on the back of the tongue to ensure swallowing
 - Pick up a paw and count toes on one foot only
 - Pretend to clip the nails on that foot
 - Pick up the rear leg on each side
 - Grab the flank on each side
 - Take your dog's tail in hand and wag it

Initially put these in an order you believe will trigger the least amount of mouthing. Start there and as you succeed with one work your way through the list until your dog keeps his or her mouth to his or herself and understands that his or her tail isn't actually his or her tail. It's your tail, and he or she just get to wag it. This will also make it far easier down the road on the veterinarians, vet techs and groomers and your dog as well.

If someone else in the household is not being subjected to the mouthing to the same extent (or at all) have them do what you just read above for a few days and once your dog absolutely gets it, in the moments before you attempt the same.

When You're Desperate

1. Instead of doing any of the above with leash handle in one hand, stand on the leash as close to your dog's collar as possible so that the puppy doesn't have enough wiggle room to mouth, nip or bite even your toes. The puppy shouldn't be able to stand or sit. The only option for the pup is to admit defeat and lay down. Apply 'Rule of Three.' It may take a while, and the puppy may get frustrated for a bit. Don't worry about it. If you're at this point it's because you've tried all the nice guy strategies. If you're thinking it might be too tough, let me know and I'll send you a few links of mother dogs and their own approach when the nice guy strategies didn't work. Trust me this is nothing.
2. Keep a 'Pet Corrector' in your pocket and try it as a deterrent. It's just a noisy cold blast of CO2 but nevertheless I'm not a fan of using an aversive to change a behavior (it's scares some dogs), but I'm not a

fan of my clients being gator bait either. So if you're desperate, give it a shot. However - only when he's mouthing etc at your immediate family as he won't develop a fear of any of you because the experience with the Corrector is slight in comparison with all the other time you spend together. If you use it on him when he mouths a guest he might learn to fear guests. Down the road as far as guests if he still hasn't learned it might be an option but right now you want to get across to him, that he's not bad, you're not bad but mouthing etc. on family is bad.



Hope this helps. Call with questions anytime. (519-457-9559)

Regards,

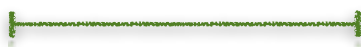
John 'Ask The Dog Guy' Wade
Embracing Science and Common Sense

London's #1, Most Experienced and Most Referred To Puppy and Dog
Trainer

519-457-9559

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Equipment/Training/Reading Resources



Training



In-Home Training With John Wade

If you live in London, Ontario or within 30 minutes travel time you can book an appointment for help with your dog with experienced companion dog trainer, author, teacher and podcaster, John Wade.

In-home companion dog training focuses on practical household and outside the home skills. It allows for scheduling to include everyone that normally interacts with the dog on a day to day basis. It provide fewer distractions and those distraction that do exist are those that the companion dog owner has to contend with normally (as opposed to a half a dozen strange dogs once a week).

There is far less stress in-home and as a result both owner and dog take in and retain more. Pace is dictated by the dog and the owner rather than other dogs and owners.



Telephone/Skype/Facetime Consultations

Telephone/Skype consultations are very thorough and followup notes/ instructions are forwarded after each consultation. While not absolutely necessary it's best to have everyone that normally interacts with the dog on a day to day basis involved in the consultation. Phone/Skype consults on average last between 90 - 120 minutes. If you wish further details email john@askthedogguy.com

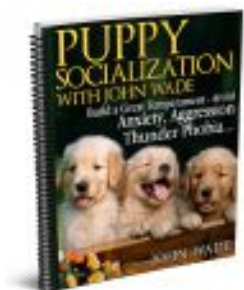
Reading



eBook - The Beautiful Balance - Dog Training with Nature's Template

If you are a do it yourself person or a search amongst local trainers only turns up trainers using 'Might Is Right' or 'All Positive/Purely Positive/Force-Free' treat, treat treat training this is e-book is a very good guide for anyone with a Molosser breed. You can learn more about its contents on

the Ask The Dog Guy website www.askthedogguy.com



eBook - Puppy Socialization with John Wade

If you don't yet have a Cane Corso - read this first. Beyond learning how to properly socialize your Cane Corso it will help you with breeder selection. If you have a Cane Corso under 12 weeks of age, read and implement if you want your Cane Corso to be fear and bomb proof in modern society. www.askthedogguy.com



eBook - Healing the Heel

If only family members with the upper body strength of the Incredible Hulk can walk your Cane Corso and even that person is starting to look like one of their arms is longer than the other - read this book. You will learn how to walk your Cane Corso, anywhere, regardless of distraction. There is more in this book then you will learn in any dog training class.

www.askthedogguy.com

Equipment



Wade Collar's Power Steering Dog Training Collar

The Wade Collar's Power Steering Dog Training Collar is a very simple, easy to put on and take off, dog-friendly, owner friendly training tool that allows increased safety and more nuanced handling and training.

It works very well because it's designed to stay up with relatively infrequent adjustment comfortably behind a dog's ears and under the jaw. (continued)

This positioning provides the dog's owner with subtle control of the dog's head which translates into better control of the dog's center of balance and in effect, their body, resulting in far greater receptiveness in the dog to the tone and body language guidance directed from the dog owner to the dog. www.wadecollars.com