

3 Stages of Bite Inhibition

Bite inhibition is learned in 3 important stages. This is always a lesson learned in puppyhood and it's vitally important that all three stages are completed as early as possible. When the puppy reaches 15 weeks old, bite inhibition or lack of, learning is complete.



Stage one is learned from the puppy's mother and siblings. This is part of the reason a litter should stay complete with mother until the puppies are eight weeks old. A puppy learns that, if they bite too hard during play with siblings or when suckling from mother, they will get told off and the food/fun will end. The puppy soon learns to self-inhibit the strength of his bite if he wants to keep eating or playing.



Stage two is learned after the puppy comes home. Just as with his early dog family, the puppy should be allowed to explore with his mouth. We teach the young dog in the same way his mother and siblings did, by stopping a game or interaction if the bite is too hard. This reinforces the puppy's ability and motivation to self-inhibit the strength of bite. We can do this for a week or two until the puppy gets the idea and never bites too hard.



Stage three is where we teach the puppy suitable and unsuitable things to explore with his mouth. Ideally; hands, trouser legs and similar things get replaced with toys and chews of his own now. We can redirect puppy onto more exciting and motivational things and he will soon learn that humans are not for chewing.

Successful completion of these three stages will lead to an adult dog that naturally inhibits his own bite. So, if he is ever in a situation where he feels he has no choice but to bite, for instance if he is hurt or scared, he shouldn't do too much damage.

