



Issue: Mouthiness

Mouthiness is when a dog puts their mouth on a person. Sometimes “mouthy” dogs apply pressure when they do this, sometimes they do not. It is usually an attention-seeking, playful behavior, or something that occurs when a dog becomes overly aroused. While this is a playful behavior, it is an inappropriate one and something that should be discouraged to prevent bigger (and more painful) problems later.

What to do about mouthiness:

- Start off by giving your dog lots of good things to chew on so that they have appropriate alternatives to putting his mouth on you. Puzzle toys that your dog needs to chew to get food out of are a great place to start. Food-based toys are best for this as these toys need to be more interesting to chew on than people.
- When playing with your dog, always play with toys. Do not use your hands to play with your dog as this will teach your dog that putting their teeth on your hands is fun and rewarding, and will encourage them to bite your hands. Your dog will not understand that biting at hands sometimes is ok and other times is not. It is important that your dog learns that putting his mouth on you is not an appropriate way to play. Avoid roughhousing or rough-and-tumble sorts of games.
- Whenever your dog puts his teeth on you, immediately say “too bad” or “whoops” in a neutral voice. Then, turn away from the dog and ignore them. If they continues to put their mouth on you while you are turned away, walk out of the room for a minute and then walk back in. If he they puts their mouth on you again, repeat this. It is important that your dog learns that putting his their mouth on you makes you go away, which is not what your dog wants, so being consistent with walking away whenever his teeth make contact with you is essential.
- It is important to both ignore the behavior you want to stop (teeth on skin) and reward the behavior you want to see more of – so make sure to reward your dog with attention, toys, treats and play when they are interacting appropriately.

If you need more help:

Seek out a consultation with a professional, certified behaviorist or a certified dog trainer.

Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers: <http://www.ccpdt.org>

Certified Applied Animal Behaviorists: <http://corecaab.org>