



TEETHING YOUR DOG

Are you thinking you should have named your dog Fang? Don't worry; we can change that.

First, you should know that the tiny little bites like chewing on a flea are dog kisses. I know; you thought that's what licking was. Licking is actually a demand for something, usually food. If your dog's doing the little tiny chew thing - and you don't have a flea - be happy. Your dog loves you. If he misjudges and nips you, yelp as explained below.

Next, remember that dogs don't have opposable thumbs. What we do with our hands, dogs have to do with their teeth. Is that the situation with your dog? If so, just YELP every time you feel teeth. Try to sound as much like a dog as you can, but really, really loud. Then walk away. Don't look at your dog, don't touch him, and don't say a word. Ignore him completely for a couple of minutes before noticing him again. If he starts being toothy again, repeat; but wait 3 to 5 minutes before noticing him. If he follows you, trying to grab you with his mouth, take him GENTLY by the collar and lead him to his kennel. Put him in it, close the door, and walk away. Don't look directly at him, don't say a word, and don't handle him more than you can help. Don't be rough though; that'll let him know he got your attention and that may outweigh anything else you do. Let him out after 5 minutes or so; but if he's whining and barking wait for a pause in the noise to open the door. Never reward a dog for being loud unless you want lots more of loud!

He doesn't have a kennel? Go to Wal-Mart or somewhere and get him one. Would you want to live in a house where everyone else had a bedroom except you? When you put him in his kennel it's like giving a child a time-out; he'll still like his kennel fine, he just won't want to be shut in there when he wants attention instead.

If the mouthing involves a child, spray the child's hands with unscented spray deodorant. The child should still yelp and walk away if the dog uses teeth, but an adult can put the dog in the kennel if the child is too young to be able to manage that. Most dogs learn really quickly that children taste bad. You can also spray the hands - or legs, or whatever's being mouthed - of older adults who may have thin or delicate skin; you can spray yourself if you want. However, you must still do the yelp-ignore-kennel stuff too. Remember that most children under 6 should be supervised for their safety and the dog's.

By the way, dogs learn not to bite from their siblings, in weeks 5 - 8 of their puppyhood. Yes, puppies learn certain skills at certain times, just as humans do. A dog removed from its litter mates before week 8 will not have learned bite inhibition. Good breeders will not adopt a dog out until after 8 weeks of age.

What if the dog is actually biting - pressure hard enough to break the skin of a normal adult or older teen so that it bleeds? If the skin is not broken enough to bleed freely or if the skin is thin or delicate, you should not consider the incident an actual bite. Refer above to the mouthing section and follow those instructions. If you've decided that the dog is biting and means to do so, refer to the article on biting.



Remember that, if you need more help or if these suggestions do not seem to be working for you, you can email me at guarrj2002@yahoo.com. I'm always happy to help dogs and those who love them.