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I Want To Have The Sweetest Dog In The World Or "Anti-aggressive Puppy Training"

By teaching your puppy to defer to you, it allows you to teach tolerance to a your puppy and to become his leader rather than his master. Playful aggression that is unchanneled or actually encouraged may ultimately result in a dog that is too dominant. Biting and protective aggression are problems caused by inappropriate training or lack of training. Early intervention is the answer for prevention of aggressive behavior. Puppies are pack animal by nature and they need to learn to defer or submit to you, the leader of the pack. For breeders, lessons can be started with newly weaned puppies. To you, a new puppy owner, you should start training as soon as your puppy arrives home.



Puppy Playful Aggression

Puppies are fun to play with. We all know that. Dogs are pack animals and hunters by nature. When pack animals play, they are often practicing their skills for how to socially climb up their [dog pack's hierarchy](#).

Here is a little test just to make sure your puppy is trying to get you to play. During the play sequence at some point the dog should exhibit either a "play bow" or some other typical play posture. If that occurs near the time of the aggression, it should help to identify this as "play related aggression."

Unfortunately, a few puppies practice these skills too aggressively and inadvertently injure their stewards (their human family members). However, with some changes in how we, their stewards, interact with them, many times these behaviors can be corrected.

1. First and foremost, a good positive reinforcement based puppy class is perhaps the best starting place. The basic skills of sit and stay may be taught (nothing too advanced for puppies).
2. Be sure to provide plenty of exercise, training, play session and play toys to meet your puppies needs. Dogs left home all day with nothing to do build up energy and enthusiasm. They need to have a productive outlet for this pent up energy. Make sure your puppy has plenty of opportunities for exercise and play.
3. Be sure you and your family is controlling the play. You (your family members) should initiate and terminate all play sessions (which should include some command and reward training within). Your puppy should not initiate nor terminate the sessions. The humans should pick up the toys to initiate play, not the puppy. Play should be something that you can control such as fetch with two toys, (therefore no need to wrestle the ball away). Your family should always stop the play short of him/her becoming highly aroused. Then ask him/her to sit, perhaps perform a few other obedience tasks, when your puppy is under control, play could be started again. You should teach your puppy to consistently [defer to you and your family](#).

Playful Biting In Puppies

Puppies should not be allowed to bite a human hand. Playful interactions among littermates, even as early as 3 – 4 weeks of age, teach how hard to bite to inflict pain. When owners tolerate play bites because they are "cute", the puppy learns to bite hard. A littermate in the same situation would yip and stop the play when the bite became painful. Punishment for biting is inappropriate, because the puppy behavior is a normal one, just unacceptable. Owners need to stop the interaction as soon as mouthing occurs and either: 1. leave the area 2. divert the puppies attention or 3. ignore the puppy (the "Invisible Puppy Game")

If your puppy begins to bite during play or bites to get attention you can:

1. walk away, go inside and stop the session - do not reinforce his/her behavior. The lack of play or attention is the punishment for noncompliance.
2. use a command to get your puppy to settle, for example, to go to his or her mat., or to redirect into alternate play toys
3. ***play the "Invisible Puppy" Game***. This is a great technique for everybody, but especially children who might be not be strong enough to use a head halter or to teach the puppy to sit.

The Invisible Puppy Game is based upon the observations made when two puppy littermates are playing together. When the first puppy bites the second puppy too hard, the second puppy will cry “YIP” informing the first puppy that he is hurt and will ignore the first puppy for a few minutes.

Humans can do the same. When your puppy places its mouth around human skin, the person should “YIP”, like a puppy would. Stop whatever activity you are doing with the puppy, then simply ignore the puppy. For children, tell them to “Yip”, stop the game they are playing immediately and pretend that the puppy is “invisible” for few minutes, that it can’t even be seen.

Continue to play the game even as the puppy learns to place his mouth on the skin gentler and gentler. Essentially what you are teaching the puppy is that that human skin is more sensitive than it truly is. Continue this game until the puppy no longer continues to bite.

4. train with a head halter such as a Gentle Leader Promise Collar

If head halter can be worn during play, a command and quick pull upwards should close the mouth and stop the nipping. If your puppy settles and plays again without biting it can be continued (or repeat the pull and release if the biting recurs).



Preventing Food Bowl Aggression

The food bowl is another area where early lessons can be very helpful in preventing dominance aggression and protective aggression. Young puppies should be readily allow the owner to pick up its food. When small children are in the family, this lesson is particularly important because children have a habit of trying to take things from dogs. Lessons to teach acceptance should be started before there is a problem.

Puppies Should Tolerate Handling By Others

Puppies also need to tolerate other lessons that will facilitate handling them as adults. Having the puppy lay on his/her back until the puppy stops struggling and stops whining is a good exercise for people, including visitors to the home.

Get Puppies Accustomed To Handling Techniques Used On Adult Dogs

For puppies, it is best to get them accustomed to handling techniques that will most likely be exposed to as an adult. These special handling techniques include cleaning of ear canals, brushing of teeth, trimming of the toenails, grooming, and wearing a collar and leash. Getting puppies accustomed to these techniques when they are still young will save you a lot of time and energy when the puppy grows up.

If these actions are not tolerated or result in growling or biting, the owner should continue the challenge firmly, but not abusively (do not hit the puppy), until the puppy’s behavior is no longer aggressive. The challenge should then be repeated frequently until the aggression is no longer elicited.

Games – Do’s and Don’ts

Games played with a puppy are extremely important in shaping its future behavior. Only those behaviors acceptable in an adult dog should be considered acceptable in a puppy. The owner must always be able to control access to a toy, so the puppy is never to win a game of tug-of-war. In general, we do not recommend tug-of-war games. Toys should be given to the puppy at the start of play and physically taken away before the puppy is through playing.

Owners should never chase the dog to get a toy – “Chase Me” should not be allowed to become a game. Instead, the environment should be managed by an enclosure or leash to ensure that the owner controls the situation. Rambunctious play should be with a toy rather than with the owner’s arms or legs.

Fetch is a great game to play if you can teach your puppy to fetch. Try starting with two or three exact duplicate toys or balls when training to fetch. This will facilitate training your puppy to drop the toy he has in his mouth at your feet before he chases after the second toy being thrown.

Reward For Obeying Commands, Not For Being Cute

Encouragement and reward for following you should also be practiced to help the puppy see the human as the leader figure. Rewards should be given for obeying a specific command, not just for being a cute, fuzzy, carbon-based life form. Rewards can be tidbits of food and petting, which may be interpreted as grooming of a subordinate by a dominant.

Although the attention span of puppies is short, they are capable of learning simple lessons in obedience. Learning to sit and lie down on command will reinforce the dominance of an owner. Shaking hands, licking, rolling over by the dog are submissive behaviors that also reinforce the owner’s higher social position. For puppies, food rewards and tactile interactions are usually more significant than praise, however combinations should be used to classically teach the puppies relationships of dominant human to subordinate dog.