

Nipping

Nipping is normally caused because of an “I want you to”, “Let’s play”, or “Pay attention to me” moment. Your dog often targets your hands because they are the most active (playful/aggressive/animated). You need to properly address that moment. I will discuss two alternative approaches to resolve this situation when your dog is nipping. I will finally discuss a “classic nipping issue” when you are walking by your dog.

With our first approach, as soon as you see your dog start to become adrenalized, stay calm and still. If you are playing, stop. If possible, move your hands away from him and stand up. This should proactively send a signal to your dog that you will not engage him and do not condone his actions. If needed, make your correction sound and use the squirt bottle or shake bottle. Praise him with a high pitched “GOOD PUPPY” when he stops trying to nip.

If he has already started to nip you, remain calm and still. Make your correction sound and stand up, if possible. The important thing is to stay calm. He is actively engaging you and expects you to respond. Praise him with a high pitched “GOOD PUPPY” when he stops nipping.

When you don’t engage, he will place additional focus on your calm demeanor. This will redirect his adrenalated actions and allow things to calm down.

Our second approach involves “setting the scene” when you want to discourage your dog’s nipping. Do this by placing some Bitter Apple on your hands. Make your hands “available to your dog” but don’t “stick them in his face”. If he starts to go for your hands, he should smell or taste how “yucky your hands have become” and will not want any part of them.

Make sure you have something else for him such as a chew toy or goodie to distract him away. As soon as he has been directed away from your hands (the target), praise him with a high pitched “GOOD PUPPY”.

***Trainer’s Note:** If the Bitter Apple is not effective, you can ramp up to Tabasco Sauce, Jalapeno Sauce, or Habanero Sauce (in that order). Be sure to wash your hands thoroughly when you have finished your exercise using these liquids.*

Now, let’s talk about walking by your dog. Dogs often nip at your heels when you pass them by. As with your hands, this is their way to engage you in play. If your dog is “nipping at your heels”, the best thing is to have the squirt bottle with you. As he approaches you from the rear, stop, turn around, calmly face him, make your correction sound, and “give him a squirt or two”.

Repeat the above process until your dog has moved off and no longer shows any interest in pursuing you. Give him a high pitched “GOOD PUPPY” for obeying your rule.

As you start to walk away, face him for a few steps. (This means that you will be walking backwards.) Facing him enforces your dominance as the boss and the legitimacy of your correction. After a few steps, turn around and continue on your way.