

Homeward Bound Golden Retriever Rescue

Golden Rule Training

Nipping or Mouthing Behavior

There is a big difference between nipping, mouthing and biting; a puppy nips as it plays and has to be taught nipping with other puppies is fine, but with humans is not appreciated. For an adult dog that nips or mouths, they probably were never trained as a puppy, someone played rough with them in the past, or they get over excited. Training for puppies is a little different than it is for an adult dog.

Dog is 4 months old and nips at fingers and toes:

Puppy nipping and mouthing is normal and not aggressive at this stage (although it could become aggressive). The puppy needs to learn early on that the human hands/skin are not chew toys.

Action: The goal is to teach the puppy the nipping hurts, say "OUCH" very loud so it startles the puppy, and then ignore her. Do not jerk your hand away; she may think it is a game. If she gets no attention for that activity it will not be so much fun and she will stop. Be consistent.

Action: Replace your hand with an appropriate chew/teething toy for the puppy to chew on for starters. Use Bitter Apple on your hands as a deterrent, the taste is unpleasant and the puppy should stop.

Dog is 10 months old and will grab hands and arms with his mouth whenever he gets excited.

At this point the dog is as big as an adult and the nipping can be harmful and very painful, so the sooner the dog learns to stop the better.

Action: Implement leadership techniques as soon as possible (see leadership article) and act as the one setting the rules. Start by not pulling back on the hand, but leave it there with no reaction, no affection and no attention. Say "NO" or "eh-eh" only when the dog stops nipping or mouthing does he get praise and positive attention.

Along with praise and attention, try to have delicious food treats handy and ignore him when he engages in any rough nipping behavior. Use the food treat 3 seconds after the mouthy behavior stops, and say "good." He will get the idea that nipping or mouthing does not get him what he wants, but when he stops he gets a treat or praise. The 3 seconds is used to pause between cues so the dog does not confuse one with the other.

Replace his need to nip or mouth with an appropriate chew toy; by redirecting the behavior he will learn what he CAN chew and what he cannot. This is the most effective choice, be consistent and have a toy ready to replace the behavior. Say "OUCH" or "NO"! Then immediately give him the toy, and say "good"! He will get the idea the only thing he can put his teeth on is the toy!