

Training Puppies Not to Bite





Leerburg

Foreword

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[Leerburg Enterprises, Inc.](#) is owned by Ed Frawley.

Ed has owned German Shepherds (GSD) for over 45 years. Since 1978 he has bred over 350 litters of German working bloodline GSDs. His dogs work in law enforcement, as S&R dogs, as competition Schutzhund dogs, and as family companions and protectors.

Since 1980 Ed has produced over 120 dog training videos and DVDs. He was a police K9 handler for 10 years and competed in several dog sports, including AKC obedience and Schutzhund. In addition he has built one of the top dog training supply businesses in the world.

If you go to the web site **Leerburg.com** you will see that it has over 10,000 printed pages. The Leerburg Web Discussion board has over 12,000 registered members and over 202,000 posts in the archives. Learn to use our site search function.

Training Puppies Not to Bite

Written by Ed Frawley

[Listen to a PODCAST of this article](#)

**The Power of Training
Dogs with Food**

\$65.00 +s&h



3 Hours, 45 Minutes

When people bring a new puppy home they are often confronted by problems that were never expected. Biting and chewing problems are just a few surprises they face. Many new owners think they adopted the pup from hell so they sit down and write us.

This article will attempt to explain why puppies bite and what can be done about it.

To understand how to solve the problem of a biting puppy you must first understand why a pup is biting. The first part of this article will explain this issue.

When puppies are about 4 weeks old they begin to play with littermates. This play involves physical activity games; they push each other around and bite one another. They chase one another in games that resemble chasing prey.

In the article I wrote titled [THE THEORY OF CORRECTIONS IN DOG TRAINING](#) I explain that this play biting establishes rank within the litter or pack. The stronger members bite and fight harder than lower ranking members.



The advertisement features a central image of a man in a blue shirt and khaki pants playing tug-of-war with a dog on a grassy field. The text is arranged around this image. At the top, the title 'The Power of Playing Tug with Your Dog' is written in bold blue font. To the left of the image, the price '\$65.00 +s&h' is displayed in red. Below the image, the duration '5 Hours, 25 Minutes' is written in red. The top of the image contains the text 'LEERBURG ENTERPRISES, INC.' and the bottom contains the title 'The Power of Playing Tug with Your Dog'.

When pups first move into a human environment it takes a period of time, usually a week or so for them to recognize their human family is now their new pack members.

When that happens many pups act exactly like they did with their littermates. That's all they know. They bite, they chew-on family members, they chase human family members just as they did with their littermates.

That's why puppies bite hands, socks, ankles and kids. They play with their new human family just like they did with littermates. They don't know any differently, how could they? Their biting is not about aggression, its about the games of pack behavior.

When we stop and think about it there is no reason for the pup to act differently. This was how they lived and played with littermates since being born so how can they be expected to know a different way?

Puppies need to learn how to live with their new human pack members and it's the humans who need to educate them.

This is where trouble starts with new pet owners. Puppies think they are playing with new friends and humans think the puppy is being aggressive.

PREY DRIVE

Prey drive is the genetic instinct many dogs have to chase. Some dogs have a higher levels of prey than others. Dogs with a lot of prey are the ones that really enjoy chasing balls; toys: kids and pant legs.

I have talked extensively about prey drive in my DVDs and my other articles. When puppies chase balls or run after sticks or bite your pant legs this is an example of prey drive not aggression. When a handler takes the dogs collar and tries to force it into a dog crate and the dog turns and tries to bite - this is aggression - either fear based or something else.

Now with this said, puppy teeth are very sharp little pointy things that HURT. In fact they can cut fingers and ankles if they latch on and you jerk your hand or leg away.

It's our job to teach our pup that biting us is not acceptable behavior. It's our job to show the puppy an alternative behavior that satisfies the puppies drives to bite. There are a number of ways to do this.

Which method you use is a personal decision.

Twenty five years ago I used to tell puppy owners to just grab the little buggers and shake them until they scream. This works but I have come to learn there are better ways. The problem with this is this can often squishes the pups prey drive (which we use in training) and damage the bond between the dog and the owner.

People that are involved in dog sports or people who want to do more advanced obedience and protection training need to preserve and build prey drive.

So there are a number of approaches to control biting.

When littermates play with one another and one gets bitten

too hard it screams. This screaming is their way to communicate that the play biting is too rough. So there are times a human screaming is enough to teach the pup that what they are doing is unacceptable.

If the pup lets go then you can praise it with a soft pat and "good boy." Give him a food treat or a high value toy to play with. Just don't over do the praise because this can often put the pup back into prey drive and the biting will start all over again.

I am currently raising my puppy in an exercise-pen right next to my desk in my office. He is laying in it as I type this. I also have a dog crate over near the wall and he sleeps in that at night. When I take him out of the ex-pen I always have a toy and my bait bag on me. I am always prepared to give him the toy if he gets to wild and starts to chew on my legs or arms. I use the food treats to trade for the toy when I want it back.

I never take my pup out without a toy and I rotate toys to keep his interest. I make sure the toys are softer toys the dog likes. The toys I use to redirect the pup from biting me are not the same toys that I leave in the exercise-pen with him during the day. The only time he gets these are when I take him out of the pen.

I have hooks on my wall by the door to my office and the toys are always there.

You can redirect the puppy by either tossing it a foot or two (not too far) or move it around in front of the pup in a manner that builds interest. You will learn through experience how to redirect your puppy off of you and onto the toy.

Once you get a pup to redirect onto a toy you are on the road towards teaching that puppy that there are more interesting prey items than your hands and legs. New owners need to learn how to play tug with their puppies. Once you learn the game of tug you will also learn how to teach the dog to OUT the tug when you want it back. The DVD [THE POWER OF PLAYING TUG WITH YOUR DOG](#) teaches you how to show

the dog that the only time a toy is fun is when he plays with you and the toy.

Pet owners are often mistakenly told "YOU SHOULD NEVER PLAY TUG GAMES WITH YOUR PET" because it makes your dog (puppy) possessive and aggressive. This is simply not true. When the game of tug is done correctly it becomes a tool that can be used in obedience training or agility training or one of the biting sports.

To increase the value of your toys the dog need to understand that all toys are YOUR TOYS and not HIS TOYS. He learns that you allow him to play with YOUR TOYS if he behaves correctly. As I said, dogs and puppies need to learn to SPIT OUT the toy when told to do so and they need to learn to bring the toy back to you when you throw it. These are trained behaviors that are extremely important because it eliminates the dog becoming possessive of the toys.

This training is all covered in the DVD I produced titled [THE POWER OF PLAYING TUG WITH YOUR DOG.](#)

**The Power of Training
Dogs with Markers**

\$40.00 +s&h



3 Hours, 33 Minutes

Your Puppy Needs Exercise

There are always going to be some puppies that are driven. These are extremely high drive pups that run around like the energizer bunny. They act as if there is no tomorrow. Puppies need exercise and a couple of good long walks (NOT RUNS!!!) per day really help.

When we have our pups in the house and out of the ex-pen they are always on leash. In fact they are never off leash until they are old enough to be trained to come when called in the face of distractions. This is usually around 9 months.

I am lucky I can take my pup outside every hour or so and for a couple of walks a day. The more exercise he gets the less he wants to bite me.

Exercise Your Puppies Mind

Exercising your puppies mind is just as important as exercising his body.

We have found the best way to do this is with marker training - operant conditioning. It's 100% motivational and is the best way we have seen to form a bond with a dog.

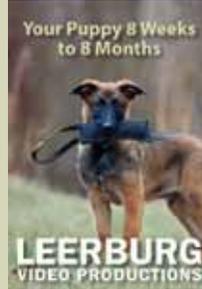
Take advantage of the free 85 page eBook I wrote titled [THE POWER OF TRAINING DOGS WITH MARKERS](#) and the [DVD by the same name](#).

We also start all of our puppies by training with food. This is the foundation of all dog training. When this is done correctly its becomes mental exercise your dog and is an art form. The DVD titled [THE POWER OF TRAINING WITH FOOD](#) trains dog owners the correct to use food to develop a level of communication that builds the bond with a new dog.

OTHER LEERBURG RESOURCES

Your Puppy 8 Weeks to 8 Months

\$40.00 +s&h



3 Hours, 18 Minutes

Basic Dog Obedience

\$40.00 +s&h



4 Hours Long

Testimonial

Hi Ed.

Let me start by telling you that I'm a 45 year old (very patient) woman who has had GSD's since age 7. Last year I helped train and raise a mule of a Goldie that my sister was ready to give to a rescue club. He is now a wonderful companion dog for her. I recently bought a West German line GSD. He is 12 weeks old today. I've never had a GSD like this one. Good and bad. I have scoured your web site, devouring every article I could read. I purchased your "8 weeks to 8 months" DVD and watched it twice. I downloaded every bit of info you can imagine. I've talked with my breeder. I have a gorgeous well trained male that I am the pack leader of. (I incorporate some of Caesar Milan also). I have, however, never in my life encountered such a demon when it comes to nipping and biting. "Gunther" simply refuses to listen in this area. A calm assertive "NO" does not work. Grabbing by the scruff till he yelps does not work. He likes the taste of bitter apple, go figure. Holding him down until he is submissive works until you release and then all hell breaks loose again. He even looks evil when he's "comin atcha"... lol. It's funny, but it's not. He's great interacting with dogs, kids... you name it, but is too confident and I can't break him of this nipping and biting. And I don't want to break his spirit. I don't like to use his crate and punishment because this is his safe-haven den and I want to keep it that way. As he gets taller, the biting is climbing further up the body. It's getting harder to even leash him to go for a walk. He'll sit on command to get ready for the walk but go at the hands when being leashed. As I said, his training is excellent. For 12 weeks he knows heel, sit, down, come, stay, place and no accidents in the house. I've had him 4 weeks now. I couldn't ask for a better dog in looks, intelligence and obedience but I'm about ready to have his baby teeth pulled out. I can't think of anything else I can do with him to stop biting on me. He has plenty of toys to play with and I do diversion but he's right back on me. I am pack leader as I said before but he does not respect that in this one area. In every other area he does but not in the house when he gets wound up. Anything else you can think of? I hate to put a prong collar on him in the home 24/7 just for nipping and biting and I

don't want to resort to putting him away in a separate room and possibly make him aloof or aggressive. I want him to be a nursing home and children's hospital companion dog so his prey drives are not going to be developed. Any help you can give will be greatly appreciated. Oh yes... he does get plenty of exercise. So it's not an issue of pent up energy. I am home with him all day and he has the recommended walk distance and time for his age along with in house play time and twice daily outdoor training. He also has started the "humpty dance," which I thought was a bit too young when he first did this at 9 weeks. Is he just too much "German"? lol j/k. Thanks Ed.

Sincerely,
Jennifer