

# **Training Puppies Not to Bite**



***By: Ed Frawley***



**Leerburg Kennels**

## **Foreword**

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[Leerburg Kennel](#) and Video 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 K-9 handler for 10 years, 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 10,000 registered members and over 120,000 posts in the archives. Learn to use our site search function.

# Training Puppies Not to Bite

*By Ed Frawley*

When people bring a new cute little puppy into their home they are often confronted with problems they never expect to have, like the pup from hell that bites the heck out of their arms and ankles.

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.

## Why Puppies Bite

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.

it takes a period of time, usually a week or so for them to recognize their human family as their new pack.

When that happens many pups will bite, chew-on and chase family members just like they did with their littermates. That's why pups bite hands, socks, ankles and kids. They are playing just like they did with littermates.

When you stop and think about it there is no reason for the pup to act differently. This was how it has lived and played with littermates so why would it live differently with humans that it likes.

This misunderstanding is where trouble starts with new pet owners. The pup is playing and the humans think this the puppy is being aggressive. The fact is the pup is simply displaying prey drive. Prey drive is the genetic instinct to chase. Some dogs have a higher level of prey than others. These are the ones which seem obsessed with chasing and chewing.

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## Prey Drive

I have talked extensively about prey drive in my DVDs and my other writings. When puppies chase balls or run after sticks or bite your pant legs this is an example of prey drive not aggression.

Now with this said puppy teeth are very sharp little pointy things that HURT. In fact they can cut a fingers and ankles.

It's our job to teach our pup that biting us is not acceptable behavior. There are a number of ways to do this. Which method you use is a personal decision.

Twenty years ago I used to tell pet owners to just grab the little buggers and shake them until they scream. This works but I have come to think there are better ways. The problem with this is that is often squishes the pups prey drive and I like to use prey drive in my later training.

People that are involved in dog sports or people who want to do more advanced obedience and protection training need to preserve prey drive while pet owners don't have a big need for this. The simplest way to approach this work is to act like a littermate.

## **What to do when Puppies Bite**

When littermates get bitten too hard they scream. This screaming is their way to communicate that the play biting is too rough. Often times a human screaming is enough to teach the pup that what they are doing is wrong.

If the pup lets go then you can praise it with a soft pat and “good boy”. Just don’t over do the praise as this will often put the pup back into prey drive and the biting will start all over again.

A better idea is to have a toy with you and redirect the pup into this toy. Either toss it a foot or two or wave it around in front of the pup in a manner that builds interest. You learn this through observation and experience with that specific dog. This is called reading your dog.

When you can get a pup to redirect into a toy you are on the road towards teaching that puppy that there are other more interesting prey items out there than your hands and legs.

Pet owners will often be told that “YOU SHOULD NEVER PLAY TUG GAMES WITH YOUR PET”

If you are not going to train your dog this is probably the correct advice. But if you plan on working with your dog then releasing a prey item when told is nothing more than a respect issue

for the pack leader. In other words, teaching the dog that the toys ARE YOUR TOYS and not HIS TOYS. I cover this concept in my article titled [THE GROUNDWORK TO BECOMING A PACK LEADER.](#)

There are always going to be some puppies they we call driven. These are extremely high drive pups that zip around like Comanches. They act as if there is no tomorrow. These pups need to have some pack leadership exercises.

This means that when the pup is being crazy I will CALMLY grab the pup by the cheeks and lift his feet of the ground, stair him right in the eye and tell him in a low voice to knock it off. I will hold him until he submits by relaxing and he looks away.



There is no violent shaking or screaming at the pup. It is all more of a clam dominant warning

to the pup. When this is done correctly they understand.

## **In Conclusion**

Pet owners can and should read the article I wrote titled [THE THEORY OF CORRECTIONS IN DOG TRAINING](#). This is especially important for those owners who are considering giving corrections to a puppy because its possible that one serious mistake of over correcting a soft puppy could have ramifications that last for months if not the dogs entire life.

So what I am saying here is that you need to use your head and be careful with puppies.

The fact is I should have written about biting puppies 20 years ago because I get a so many emails on this problem. I do have to say the topic is covered in detail in both my DVD's [Your Puppy 8 Weeks to 8 Months](#) and [Dealing with Dominant and Aggressive Dogs](#).

## Establishing Pack Structure with the Family Pet

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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 website, 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 Ceasar Millan 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

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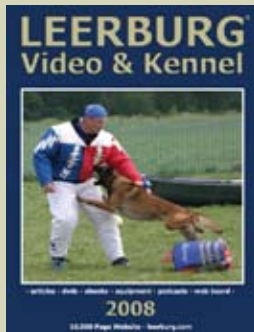
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