

## Encourage Acceptable Behavior

Redirect your puppy's tendency for nipping and biting by offering her more acceptable objects (such as chew toys) whenever you pet them. This technique can be especially effective when children want to pet them. As you or the child reaches out to scratch them behind the ears with one hand, offer the chew toy with the other. This will not only help your puppy learn that people and petting are wonderful, but will also keep their mouth busy while they are being petted. Alternate which hand does the petting and which one has the chew toy. You may need to start off by petting or scratching your puppy for short periods of time, since the longer they are petted, the more likely they are to get excited and start to nip.

## Discourage Unacceptable Behavior

You must also teach your puppy to be gentle with hands and show them that nipping results in unpleasant consequences. Teach your puppy that nipping "turns off" any attention and social interaction with you. As soon as a nip occurs, look your puppy right in the eye and yell "OUCH" as though you've been mortally wounded. Then ignore them. Leave the room if you must, but ignore them until they are calm, and then try the chew toy and petting method again.

## Jumping Up

When your puppy jumps up on you, they want attention. Even if you push them away, they are still getting attention (even if it is a response that you might consider negative).

### When Your Puppy Jumps Up:

- Fold your arms in front of you, turn away from them and say "off."
- Continue to turn away from them until all four paws are on the ground, then quietly praise them and give them a treat. If the puppy knows the "sit" command, give the command when all four paws are on the ground, then quietly praise them and give them a treat while they are in the sitting position.
- If they begin to jump while you're praising them, simply turn away and repeat the second step, above. Remember to keep your praise low-key.

When your puppy realizes that they get no attention from you while they are jumping up, but does get attention when they sit, they will stop jumping up. Remember, once you've taught them to come and sit quietly for attention, you must reward their behavior. Be careful not to ignore them when they come and sit politely, waiting for your attention.

## What Not to Do

Attempts to tap, slap, or hit your puppy in the face for nipping or jumping up are almost guaranteed to backfire. Several things may happen, depending on your puppy's temperament and the severity of the correction:

- They could become "hand-shy" and cringe or cower whenever a hand comes toward their face.
- They could become afraid of you and refuse to come to you or approach you at all.
- They could respond in a defensive manner and attempt to bite you to defend themselves.
- They could interpret a mild slap as an invitation to play, causing them to become more excited and even more likely to nip.

Never play "tug-of-war" or wrestling games with your puppy if you're having a nipping problem. These types of games encourage out-of-control behavior, grabbing, lunging, and competition with you—behaviors you don't want them to learn.

## Be Consistent

It's important that all behaviors, acceptable and unacceptable, be managed consistently by all family members. And remember that any method you try will probably not be

effective unless you work hard to teach your puppy an acceptable alternative behavior.

- Use a training technique called “Nothing in Life Is Free” to establish your leadership in a safe, nonconfrontational way. This technique requires your puppy to “work” for everything they get from you. Have your puppy obey at least one command (such as “sit”) before you pet them, give them dinner, put on their leash, or throw them a toy. If your puppy doesn’t know any commands or doesn’t perform them reliably, you’ll first have to teach them, using positive reinforcement techniques, and practice with them daily.

### **A Note about Children and Puppies**

It’s very difficult for children under eight or nine years old to practice the kind of behavior modification outlined here.

Children’s first reaction to being nipped or mouthed by a puppy is to push the puppy away with their hands and arms. This will be interpreted by the puppy as play and will probably cause the puppy to nip and mouth even more. Adults should closely monitor all interactions between their children and the puppy.



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4910 A street SE | Auburn WA 98092

**253-249-7849**

[www.auburnvalleyhs.org](http://www.auburnvalleyhs.org)

[info@AuburnValleyHS.org](mailto:info@AuburnValleyHS.org)

*The Auburn Valley Humane Society is dedicated to providing shelter, quality care and love for all the lost, mistreated and abandoned animals in Auburn. AVHS utilizes all available resources to ensure each animal is placed into a loving and forever home and promotes responsible pet ownership through education and outreach.*

Adapted from material originally developed by applied animal behaviorists at the Dumb Friends League, Denver, Colorado.  
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# Dealing with Normal Puppy Behavior

*Nipping and Rough Play*



## Auburn Valley Humane Society

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