

morley vetcentre

MOUTHING & NIPPING



Picture your puppy playing with his littermates...how are they playing? The answer...they play by chasing, mouthing and nipping at each other. What a fun game right?!

Now, puppy has left his littermates and has a new home with you. As he gets to know you he decides "hey this new person is fun and I want to play....hmmm.....I know a really fun game!"

OUCH those puppy teeth hurt! But please take it as a compliment when those razor sharp teeth come towards you—your new puppy is bonding with you and wants to PLAY WITH YOU!

Instead of feeling frustrated by this behaviour let's find fun ways to teach puppy HOW TO PLAY WITH PEOPLE!

THE AWESOME GAME OF TUG!

One of the simplest ways to direct puppy mouthing is to incorporate toys in to your play and training sessions. This gives puppy a fun way to play how they naturally would (chase and grab the tug!), while your hands are safely out of reach of those sharp teeth!

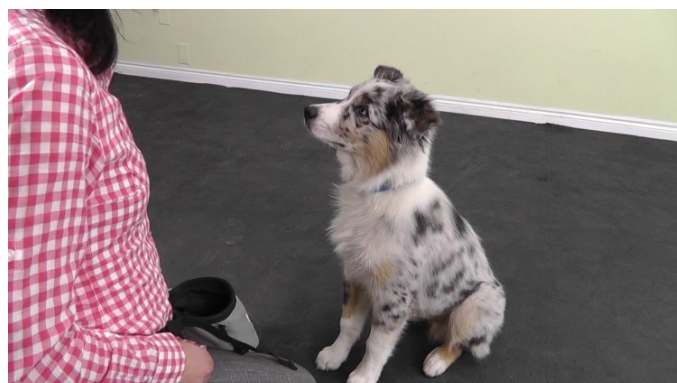
Keep your tuggy toy in a safe location and only bring it out when you are interacting with puppy. Puppy can have his other toys to chew on lying around the house, but keep the tuggy toy as a special treat that ONLY comes out when you are playing. This creates a toy of extremely high value which can be used in training sessions and at play time.



AROUSAL LEVELS

Puppies, like young children, can get over aroused pretty quickly, and then struggle to calm down. Observe puppy during play sessions and if arousal levels are increasing pause the game and spend a few moments working on some manners training (sit, attention, drop etc). Once puppy has calmed down and is focused you can then restart the play session. Doing this on a regular basis teaches puppy impulse control and that training is heaps of fun (eg. a polite sit is reinforced with a game of tug!)

If during a play session puppy is too aroused to be able to offer a calm sit, simply stop the game and move away from puppy (if outside—calmly walk inside etc). This teaches puppy that high arousal levels means the fun stops and their favourite person (YOU!) stops interacting with them. You will soon find puppy offering more appropriate play to ensure you stay engaged with the fun game of tug!



TEACHING A 'LEAVE IT' CUE

An important step in using a tuggy toy in play and training is to teach a reliable 'leave it' cue. Initially work on this exercise when puppy is having fun playing tug, but not over aroused!

While puppy is tugging present a treat in front of his nose—as he drops the tuggy to gobble up the treat mark the behaviour with a 'YES' and once he has finished the treat re-engage in the game of tug.

Once puppy is dropping the tuggy toy as soon as your hand moves (with treat in it) towards him, start to add your verbal cue 'LEAVE'. Again mark the behaviour with a clear 'YES' and give puppy the treat.

Once this behaviour is established you can try the cue 'LEAVE' and, instead of giving a food reward, mark the behaviour with the 'YES' and re-engage immediately in the game of tug. Instead of the food being the reward, you initiating the game of tug again is the reward!



MORE FUN GAMES TO PLAY

Burn off energy by finding other fun ways to interact with your puppy.

- Game of chasey (puppy chasing you) is a great introduction to super reliable recalls
- Treasure hunts (hide treats, or you run and hide!) are lots of fun & introduce your puppies to the world of Nosework
- Sniffy walks in a variety of locations allow your puppy to engage their nose and explore!
- Enrol in pet dog training classes to learn fun tricks, manners training, pet dog agility, training games and exercises



For further advice please contact us at
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