



## *The Mouthy Dog*

If you've ever spent any time watching dogs play, no doubt you've noticed that biting is a common component to their interactions. It is a natural part of their play repertoire. So, when a client complains to me that their dog is mouthy when they play with them, I immediately ask them to describe how they play together. Usually these owners, who are more often than not male owners, play and wrestle with their dogs without the use of a toy. This type of mouthiness is the most common and the most easily fixed.

When you play with your dog, you must always use a toy as a shared object of play. Playing any other way is only encouraging your dog to express their playfulness by using his mouth on your body parts, much like he would with another dog. So a toy gives your dog a sanctioned target for his mouth.

Which brings us to our next topic – the game of tug...

### **Playing Tug**

It is a commonly held belief that playing tug with your dog will in-



crease aggressive behavior. In fact, tug is cooperative in nature. It is an adaptation of part of a canid's natural hunt sequence; in particular it is the way in which members of a pack would subdue, kill and dissect their prey. So, though there is a competitive aspect to the game of tug, some dogs may even handicap themselves, particularly when playing with a weaker playmate such as a puppy, in the interest of prolonging the game. So, contrary to the sources that advise otherwise, tug offers a beautiful means for play and bonding with your dog.

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## *About the Trainer*

Dog trainer **LAURA GARBER**, CPDT-KA, is a professional member of the Association of Pet Dog Trainers (APDT) and is certified by the Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers (CCPDT), the first national certification for dog trainers.

Laura has authored articles about dogs and dog behavior in dog-centric magazines and on-line resources.

Laura believes strongly in strengthening the bond between human and companion animal. For this reason, she regards training as an exercise in building relationship rather than obedience. Such an approach promises greater understanding and symbiosis within our family packs.

Log on to [www.myWoofGang.com](http://www.myWoofGang.com).



### *Introductory Training Offer*

Get an extra 30 minutes of training when you purchase a 4-session training package.

(Offer details based on availability.)

Call **WOOF GANG** at **646.345.5116** to make an appointment.

### *A Baby On the Way*

Your dog has been a loving, loyal family member. But now you have a new baby on the way, a little being who will in many ways consume the attention and energy that has until now been channeled toward your pup. Patient, positive preparation will help the relationship between your dog and your baby start out on the right foot.

**WOOF GANG** can help you prepare your pooch for the changes that lie ahead. Call **646.345.5116**.

### *Time-Outs*

When your dog is practicing an undesirable behavior, like nipping at heels or demand barking, give her a time-out. Properly executed, she will quickly learn that her behavior has an undesirable result. Then teach her an alternative more appropriate behavior.

Let **WOOF GANG** help you train your dog more effective ways of getting what she wants in life! Call today!

## The Mouthy Dog (cont.)

### Arousal due to Prolonged Play

As dogs become more aroused, their behavior is more likely to deteriorate. They may start to jump on you, crash into you, or nip. To teach your dog how to better master his arousal levels, interleave play with control behaviors like *sit* or *down* before releasing him to play again. So, when playing fetch, as your dog returns with the ball, ask for a *drop*, then for a *sit* before throwing the ball and releasing him to retrieve it. In a game of tug, ask for a *drop*, then a *down* before releasing him to take the tug toy again. Over time, these games with rules will foster more respectful play habits.



### Demand Behavior

Dogs may use a host of behaviors, such as barking, whining, pawing, even nipping, in order to incite what they want, such as play, food or attention. First and foremost, nothing good should result from these bad behaviors. To acquiesce to the demand is to teach your dog that such strategies work. Instead, respond by clearly demonstrating that the object of his desire becomes less attainable, not more. So, for instance, if your dog badgers you to produce his dinner or to play with him, withhold attention, turn your back, even go as far as to leave the room to clearly communicate to him that his methods are not working. Only when he makes his requests by sitting and waiting quietly should you consider granting his wishes.

### Inhibiting Mouthiness

So what should you do if your dog is mouthy? Some popular techniques are to hold the dog's mouth shut or to tap him on the nose. In fact, depending on the dog, these are likely to provoke more mouthiness or, worse, an aggressive response.

Instead, use a NRM (No Reward Marker) – mark the bad behavior with a firm “uh-uh!” and remove your hands out of reach. If the behavior continues, then give your dog a time-out. If all else fails, try applying something unpleasant tasting to your hands like Bitter Yuck or Tiger Balm. Hopefully your dog will learn that humans don't taste very good and he'll be less likely to take them in his mouth in the future.

### The Best Antidote

The best antidote to any undesirable behavior is *training*. Through training, you can establish appropriate behavior patterns, build your dog's impulse control, and foster a respectful and loving relationship between you.

For this article in its entirety, log on to [www.myWoofGang.com](http://www.myWoofGang.com).

TRAINING IS  
THE LANGUAGE  
THAT BINDS!



## Ask Woofie...

**WOOFIE**, Fergie is our year old cockapoo. Whenever I sit on the couch and try to relax she will not stop barking at me. I turn my head and my back to her. She doesn't stop. I leave the room and she stops barking. As soon as I sit down she starts barking again. How can I break this habit? Thanks for your advice. Maryann

**Hiya, Liann!** It sounds like leaving the room does work in terms of making her stop barking, so that's what I would do. If she barks, mark it with an “uh-uh!” to mark the undesirable behavior; if it continues, stand up and leave the room, closing the door behind you. When she's quiet, return. If she barks, leave the room again, and return for her being quiet; and so on. While the first session or two will mean a lot of getting up and leaving for you, I think she'll learn fairly quickly that in order to enjoy your company, she will have to be quiet and polite. Hope that helps!

I'd also suggest training her to offer another more appropriate behavior to practice instead of her demand barking – perhaps lying quietly at your feet!

Happy training! **WOOFIE**



Count Chocula is a young Dutch shepherd mix, smart, friendly, and hard-working. He's been enjoying the challenges of training with the PAL program trainers at the Liberty Humane Society in Jersey City. This little pal is looking for his forever home. Might it be yours?