

GROWLING

It's normal to feel shocked, disappointed and even embarrassed if your dog or puppy growls at you, another person or pet. The good news is growling is a perfectly normal canine behaviour that can actually be very useful!



Why do dogs growl?

- Growling is a method of canine communication that is used as a warning signal to indicate that a puppy or dog is uncomfortable, frightened or feeling threatened.
- Growling is a distance increasing behaviour that will often precede a snap or a bite.
- Dogs frequently use more subtle attempts at communication before growling such as lip licking, turning away and freezing. When these signs go unnoticed or ignored, dogs can feel the need to growl and even snap to get their message across.

What should you do if your dog or puppy growls?

Stop whatever you are doing and review the situation. Is something happening that could be making your dog feel stressed or worried?

Growling is good!

Remember that growling is a preferable method of communication to biting. Avoid reprimanding your dog for growling and instead offer some reassurance or remove them from the situation.

A dog who feels that their growl isn't working may skip the warning next time and escalate straight to snapping or biting instead.



KIDS AND DOGS



Dogs can be wonderful companions for children, offering friendship, responsibility, and plenty of fun.

Growing up with a dog helps children develop compassion, empathy, and respect for living things. Having a family pet can also teach kids valuable lessons about caring for others. However, it's important to recognise that dogs and children communicate differently, and misunderstandings can happen in an instant.

A recent study found that incidents involving the family dog were the most common reasons children were admitted to hospital for dog bites. As a parent or caregiver, it's important to invest time into learning to speak dog so that you can help both your two and four legged family members stay safe.

Warning signs

Dogs communicate using subtle body language signs that show us how they're feeling. Pay close attention to your dog when they're near children and keep an eye out for signs that show that they might be uncomfortable or ready to move away.

Common signs of stress in dogs:

- Lip licking
- Whites of the eyes showing
- Looking away or trying to move away
- A tucked tail
- Holding ears back



Top tips for safe interactions between children and the family dog

- Actively supervise children and pay attention to your dog's body language.
- Look for signs your dog is enjoying the interaction such as moving closer for more pats.
- If you aren't able to give your full attention separate children and dogs using baby gates.
- Avoid hugs – hugging is a human behaviour and is stressful for dogs. Teach children to blow kisses or wave hello instead.
- Teach children to leave the dog alone when sleeping or eating.
- Show older children how to interact by teaching tricks and rewarding the dog with treats.



HOW TO TACKLE PUPPY BITING



Just like babies, puppies use their mouths to explore and interact with the world around them. While mouthing (sometimes more accurately called puppy biting) is normal for puppies and may seem harmless while your pup is young, it's wise to remember that adult dogs who bite aren't quite so fun! For this reason it's important to help your puppy learn when and how hard to use their teeth.

Why do puppies bite?

Play biting stems from the dog's ancestry as social carnivores. Wolves and wild dogs are equipped with strong jaws in order to hunt large prey animals. In social situations, there will be arguments over resources and it's important that dogs use inhibited jaw strength to communicate, rather than injuring members of their social group.

The ability to bite without maiming force is rehearsed in puppyhood. When one puppy bites another too hard with those needle-sharp teeth, play grinds temporarily to a halt, which provides a potent consequence to the biting puppy. Over time, the bites become consistently more gentle, in order to keep play going. Without this constant feedback about their jaw pressure, puppies are at higher risk of growing up without acquiring the capacity to inhibit the force of their jaws.

What should you do about puppy biting?

The best policy for owners of baby puppies is to allow play-biting with the adults in the house, provided it is not too hard. If your puppy bites too hard, quietly end the interaction for a few seconds.

Puppy play

Provide plenty of opportunities for your puppy to play with other puppies. Our Baby Puppy Course provides a safe, fun environment where puppies can learn and make new friends under the supervision of experienced trainers.

Be proactive

Make sure to provide an assortment of toys and chews so that your puppy has lots of appropriate options to choose from. The teething process for dogs occurs much faster and can be much more intense than human teething.

Chewing provides pups with some relief from the pain of new teeth breaking through. It's a good idea to keep a toy within arm's reach so that you can easily redirect biting behaviour to a more appropriate item.

Learn your puppy's cues

Just like baby humans, baby puppies can become easily overtired which can cause mouthing behaviours to escalate. You can help to soothe your puppy to sleep by providing something to chew on or to lick at in a calm, quiet space such as a puppy pen or crate.

Remain calm

When dealing with puppy biting, remember to stay calm. Shouting or screaming is likely to increase your puppy's arousal further and can turn biting into a game.

RESOURCE GUARDING

Resource guarding is a relatively common behaviour in dogs. It can occur when your dog feels worried about a treasured item or resource being taken away.

Just as we protect our homes and valuables, it is normal for dogs to feel protective over items they consider to be important.

The most commonly guarded resources include:

- Food
- Items associated with food (e.g. empty food bowls, bins, food wrappers)
- Toys and balls
- Locations (e.g. beds, areas where dog is usually fed, food preparation areas, entrances to areas)
- People (i.e. individuals within the family)

What does resource guarding look like?

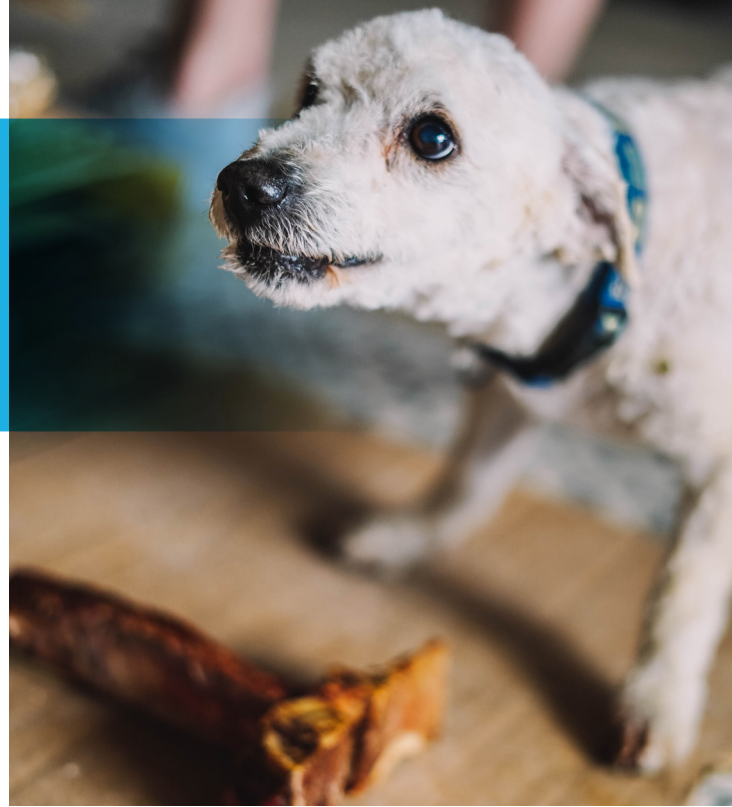
Some common signs of resource guarding are:

- Eating food more quickly as you approach
- Hunching over the item
- Staring at you
- Moving between you and the resource
- Growling
- Showing teeth
- Barking
- Rushing or lunging towards you
- Air snapping
- Biting



The important thing to remember is that dogs who guard resources are not 'bad'. They are usually feeling insecure and trying to communicate that they are feeling threatened.

If you notice your dog showing any signs of resource guarding you should slowly move away and give your dog more space.



Dogs who feel that more subtle attempts at communicating their needs have gone unnoticed will often escalate to more severe behaviour such as snapping and biting.

How can you help your dog?

You can help your dog by providing a quiet, safe space for them to eat their meals, chews and treats without being disturbed. It's extremely important not to pester your dog or try to 'test' their behaviour. If you have more than one pet at home, make sure that you can separate them at feeding time to avoid competition and stress.

Pets can also compete over your attention. Providing a treat in an enriched environment for one dog while you spend time with another can help reduce anxiety. Make sure that there are more than enough resources such as beds, food and water and toys to reduce the risk of conflict.

How to teach your dog to 'give':

- Begin a fun game of tug with your dog
- After a few seconds offer a treat under their nose in exchange for the toy.
- Repeat this exercise, adding in the word 'give' right before offering the treat.
- Your dog will start to drop the toy following the 'give' cue. Don't forget to reward with a really great treat to show your dog how well they've done!