

Sherwood Dog Training Club

AKC License Club

March 2026 Newsletter



The Sherwood Dog Training Club (SDTC) was formed in 2003, with official status as a non-profit corporation established in 2006. We also have Tax Exempt status with the IRS as a 501(c)4. We received our notice that we have become an AKC Licensed Club in August of 2008.

Sherwood Dog Training Club

President: Danielle Silverstein

Vice President: Linda Ruedy

Secretary: Robin Murphy

Treasurer: Jill Faulmann

Board: Darlene Brushwein

Board: Jan Lewis

Board: Helen Hamilton

Newsletter: Darlene Brushwein

Website:

<https://www.sherwooddtc.org/>



Sherwood Dog Training Club is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Wednesday, March 4, 2026 @ 7PM

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/2517890074?pwd=VGdKeGhtM3lOT3FOdnJoVEUxRjZoQT09&omn=87924415008>

Meeting ID: 251 789 0074

Passcode: 0Avc7r



Mark Your Calendars

EVENTS



Dates to Mark for 2026 at Cash Arena in Sherwood, OR

Trial Date: Obedience only Saturday, April 18, 2026 and Sunday, April 19, 2026

Match Date: Sunday, April 12, 2026

Trial Date: Rally only / Saturday, May 30, 2026 and Sunday, May 31, 2026

Match Date: Sunday, May 17, 2026

Trial Date: Obedience only Saturday, October 10, 2026 and Sunday, October 11, 2026

Match Date: Sunday, October 4, 2026

Two-Day SDTC Obedience Members Match Mar. 21-22, 2026

Penny Harvey's training building, 18830 SE McQuaw Rd., Sandy OR 97055



The April Trials are full.

We are currently taking entries for a wait list.

You may mail you entries with payment to:
Darlene Brushwein, Trial Secretary
7920 SW Gearhart Drive
Beaverton, OR 97007

April 1st is the closing date for these trials

A full refund is available if you are entered and decide to pull your entry before the closing date.

For a complete Look at all AKC upcoming Events

Events: <https://webapps.akc.org/event-search/#/search>

NOW OPEN

We are accepting entry forms

Rally Trials

Saturday, May 30, 2026

Sunday, May 31, 2026

Link to premium and entry form

<https://www.sherwooddtc.org/services>

"He behaves that way because..."

He is fearful
He is dominant
He is shy
He is aggressive
He is intelligent
He is weird
He is hypersensitive
He has separation anxiety
He is stubborn
He is reactive

He is impulsive
He is Alpha
He is pushy
He is independent
He is a typical [insert breed]
He is hyper
He is territorial
He is friendly

LABELS

A LABEL CAN NOT CAUSE A BEHAVIOR. It is the behavior that causes the label. The problem with labels is that they suggest that behaviors are INSIDE the animal, and they also make it hard for us to see what THE ENVIRONMENT (or people) are doing in relation to what the animal is doing. BEHAVIOR and ENVIRONMENT are inseparable.

ALWAYS ASK:
What is the animal DOING and under WHAT CONDITIONS?

#LLA #BEHAVIORSCIENCE #LEARNINGSOURCE #SCIENCEMATTERS
behaviorworks.org | doggiedrawings.net

Lili '18



The April 12 Match is open for entry.

The match entry form is attached below and is also on the SDTC website.
<https://www.sherwooddtc.org/services>

All information on how to enter is on the entry form.

This match is open to **SDTC members only**.

You may have one or two runs.

Runs are \$10 each, \$11 if using PayPal on the SDTC website.

There will be no refunds given on this match.

The closing date for the match is Monday April 6.

There will be 2 rings and the match will start with utility in one ring and open in the other. Once those classes are done, the rings will switch to novice and beginner novice.

Start time will be 9am and could go until 5pm, depending on how many people enter.



Sunday April 12, 2026 SDTC Intra-Club Match Entry Form

Match is at the Cash arena, 17720 SW Elsner Rd, Sherwood, OR 97140

All runs \$10 (\$11 if using paypal on SDTC website) for 10 minutes, maximum of 2 runs per member.

Please plan to help run through other dogs by calling the exercises or stewarding. We need help at the end of the match packing up and sweeping up please!

Run order and other information will be emailed out to entrants approximately 1 week prior to the match

Your Name: _____

Address: _____

e-mail: _____ phone(s) _____

Are you a member of the Sherwood Dog Training Club ? (circle one) YES NO

First class requested _____ Dog name _____

Dog breed _____ jump height _____

Second class requested _____ Dog name _____

Dog breed _____ jump height _____

Amount enclosed _____ or Amount paid Paypal _____

By signing this entry form, the exhibitor agrees to the following. Unsigned forms will be returned along with all fees.

I hereby release the Sherwood Dog Training Club, Inc., the Owners of Cash Arena other animal owners, property owners, instructors, spectators, and/or any other participants from any and all liability for accidents, injuries and/or damages to me, my dog or property caused by participation in any activities including the period of time immediately prior to and/or immediately after the conclusion thereof so long as the animals are located on the premises designated for the activity. I understand that by participation, I am a joint venture participant and assume all liability for injury to my dog, my property or myself occasioned by this participation. This waiver shall be effective from the date of signing.

To the best of my knowledge, I attest that I do not have or have symptoms of COVID-19 at the time of attending this event. I will not have knowingly been in contact with or exposed to any known carrier of COVID-19 within the past 14 days. I agree that I am attending this event entirely at my own risk and take full responsibility for my own health and safety during this event. I will not hold SDTC or any other person affiliated with the event in any way liable for any present or future COVID-19 exposure or illness incurred during or after this event. I agree to follow all SDTC, county, state and CDC rules and requirements to reduce spread and possible exposure to this virus.

SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____

**SEND ENTRY/WAIVER FORM WITH FEES TO:
Betty Rose, 2015 SW 204th Ave, Beaverton OR 97003**

MAKE CHECK OUT TO SDTC

If using paypal, send electronic copy to bettyrose97070@yahoo.com

Upcoming UKC Shows / www.ukcdogs.com

Washington

March 28-29	Lilac City Dog Training Club, Davenport, WA Nose Work
May 23-24	Puget Sound K-9s, Graham, WA Nose Work
July 31-Aug. 2	UKC Western Classic, Longview, WA Agility, Rally, Obedience
June 19-21	Lilac City Dog Training Club, Spokane, WA Obedience & Rally Regional Qualifying Event
Aug. 22-23	Lilac City Dog Training Club, Spokane, WA Nose Work
Oct. 17-18	Lilac City Dog Training Club, Spokane, WA Nose Work

Oregon

May 1-3	Canine Action Pack, Cornelius, OR Obedience & Rally
Nov. 13-15	Canine Action Pack, Cornelius, OR Obedience & Rally

Montana

May 16-17	Rocky Mountain Dog Stars, Huntley, MT Nose Work
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Utah

March 14-15	Utah Nose Work Club, Salt Lake City, UT Nose Work
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California

April 3-5	NorCal K9 Events, Red Bluff, CA Obedience & Rally
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Details at ukcdogs.com

United Kennel Club (UKC) is an international dog registry celebrating bonds, rewarding ability, and preserving the value of a pedigree. <http://www.ukcdogs.com/>



**The Portland Dog Training Club
could use our help.**

**They need stewards for their Obedience and
Rally Trials on March 14 - 15, 2026 at the Clark
County Fairgrounds Horse Arena, Ridgefield, WA**

**Contact Joan Armstrong
joana@zoiedog.com**



Located in the Hazel Dell area of Vancouver, WA:

7206 NE 37th Ave., Unit A
Vancouver, WA 98665

Phone: 503-807-1212

Email: info@dogdaysnw.com

Classes

Novice Obedience & Foundations Class – Sunday at 9 am

Start out on the right paw. This class will teach dogs and handlers the foundations, the rules, the exercises and so much more.

Novice Rally Class – Sundays at 10 am

This class will focus on the basic foundations all the way to walking into the ring.

Rally Class Openings

Masters Rally - Thursdays at 9am

Excellent Rally - Thursdays at 10:15 am

For more info call/email

Dee Pigman - Instructor

Dog Days

503.807.1212

deepigman@comcast.net

www.dogdaysnw.com



Marcie earned her UKC Open title at the Canine Action Pack Trials January 31, 2026.

First time back in the ring with my new knee.
Submitted By: Jan Lewis





<https://dogdaysnw.com/>

Dog Days Obedience Run Through Class with Laurie Rubin

A monthly half day Obedience Run Through Class is starting at Dog Days Dog Training in Vancouver, Washington, on the fourth Wednesday morning of the month. Dog and handler teams run through the exercises offered at obedience trials. The time can be used for any level of obedience and/or for problem solving specific exercises. Handler choice whether to ask for feedback or simply have the exercises called as in a trial.

This month Wednesday, March 25th \$15 via PayPal or Zelle or \$17 via mailed check.

Time slots can be reserved by clicking on the following link to fill out your entry information on a Google

Form <https://forms.gle/8Ay9aaGZykZ8Ry6p9> **AND** sending \$15/time slot via PayPal <https://www.paypal.com/> to Laurie Rubin. After logging in to PayPal and clicking "**Send,**" search for

Laurie Rubin or earthlaurie@sonic.net. My link has a photo of a red merle Aussie. In the box that asks "What's this For?," please type "Dog Days March 25, 2026 Run Through Class." Zelle \$15 payments accepted, too. Checks made out to Laurie Rubin for \$17/time slot are OK. **Both your payment and Google Form must be received for your entry to count.** Payments are non-refundable unless the class fills before I receive your entry. In that case, I will notify you and refund your payment. The schedule will be e-mailed to those who have reserved a slot by the day before the class.

Next class. Wednesday, April 22nd.

Time slots can be reserved by clicking on the following link to fill out your entry information on a Google Form <https://forms.gle/QaeAzQBZPNGcrfF8> **AND** sending \$15/time slot via PayPal <https://www.paypal.com/> to Laurie Rubin. After logging in to PayPal and clicking "**Send,**" search for Laurie Rubin or earthlaurie@sonic.net. My link has a photo of a red merle Aussie. In the box that asks "What's this For?," please type "Dog Days April 22, 2026 Run Through Class." Zelle \$15 payments accepted, too. Checks made out to Laurie Rubin for \$17/time slot are OK. **Both your payment and Google Form must be received for your entry to count.** Payments are non-refundable unless the class fills before I receive your entry. In that case, I will notify you and refund your payment. The schedule will be e-mailed to those who have reserved a slot by the day before the class.

Future class date: Wednesday, May 27th.

Submitted By: Cindy Bendure

My friend Roger makes and sells hooks for Ruffland crates; which fit sizes medium through Extra Large. Works great for leashes and training gear!

Custom Accessories for Ruffland Kennels

Roger Davis has designed and fabricated custom accessory hooks for **Ruffland Kennels**.

Hooks are available for three kennel sizes. Intermediate, Large and Extra Large with 7 colors to choose from (Cyan, Orange, Red, Blue, White, Black, and Yellow).

Hooks are \$7 each or \$20 for a set of three (one of each style).

Contact: roger.davis@comcast.net



Obedience Run Through Class with Laurie Rubin

A monthly Obedience Run Through Class takes place at **Penny Harvey's training building in Sandy, Oregon**. Dog and handler teams run through the exercises offered at obedience trials. The time can be used for any level of obedience and/or for problem solving specific exercises. Handler choice whether to ask for feedback or simply have the exercises called as in a trial. This class is run by Laurie Rubin.

No class in March.

There will be a Sherwood Dog Training Club members only match. March 21st – March 22nd
Form to sign up is below.

Next month's class, **Sunday, April 5**, \$15 via PayPal for each slot of up to 15 minutes or \$16 via mailed check.

Time slots can be reserved by clicking on the following link to fill out your entry information on a Google Form <https://forms.gle/sqUjMzAdMFKvdyLa6> AND sending \$15/time slot via PayPal <https://www.paypal.com/> to Laurie Rubin. After logging in to PayPal and clicking "Send," search for Laurie Rubin or earthlaurie@sonic.net. My link has a photo of a red merle Aussie. In the box that asks "What's this For?," please type "April, 2026 Run Through Class." Zelle \$15 payments accepted, too. If you prefer to mail a check for \$16/time slot, be sure to also fill out your entry information on the Google Form linked above. Payments are non-refundable unless the class fills before I receive your entry. In that case, I will notify you and refund your payment.

Entries are non-transferable.

These classes have been filling.

Both your payment and Google Form must be received for your entry to count. The Thursday before the class, the schedule and driving directions will be e-mailed to those who have reserved a slot.

Future class date: May 3rd.



Two-Day SDTC Obedience Members Match Mar. 21-22, 2026
Heated Building, Single Ring--Matted and Gated

Saturday--Utility & Open B Sunday--Open A, Novice, Beginner Novice & Grad Novice

Match location: Penny Harvey's training building, 18830 SE McQuaw Rd., Sandy OR 97055

All runs \$10 (\$11 if using PayPal on SDTC website) for 10 minutes. Initial maximum of 2 entries per member. Pre-payment required for runs to be scheduled. If match doesn't fill by 2/21/26, you will have the opportunity to add runs, using a separate copy of this entry form. For each entry, club members are expected to either help with clean up or to steward or "judge" for one or more runs. Entries close 3/11/26 or when match fills. Run order and other information will be emailed out to entrants by 2/26/25. Make checks out to SDTC and mail with this entry form to Holly Thau, 2743 Fairway St., Woodburn, OR 97071. Or pay by PayPal and email entry form to htraindogs@gmail.com.

Questions? Holly htraindogs@gmail.com or Laurie earthlaurie@sonic.net.

Your Name: _____

Address: _____

e-mail: _____ phone(s): _____

First class requested _____ Dog name _____

If entering Open, specify Open A or Open B. Saturday entry-- if Utility, Open B or Grad Open. Sunday entry-- if Open A, Novice, Grad Novice or Beginner Novice.

Dog breed _____ jump height _____

Second class requested _____ Dog name _____

If entering Open, specify Open A or Open B. Saturday entry-- if Utility, Open B or Grad Open. Sunday entry-- if Open A, Novice, Grad Novice or Beginner Novice.

Dog breed _____ jump height _____

Amount enclosed _____ or Amount paid via Paypal _____

By signing this entry form, the exhibitor agrees to the following. Unsigned forms will be returned along with all fees.

I hereby release the Sherwood Dog Training Club, Inc., the Owners of Penny Harvey Training Building, other animal owners, property owners, instructors, spectators, and/or any other participants from any and all liability for accidents, injuries and/or damages to me, my dog or property caused by participation in any activities including the period of time immediately prior to and/or immediately after the conclusion thereof so long as the animals are located on the premises designated for the activity. I understand that by participation, I am a joint venture participant and assume all liability for injury to my dog, my property or myself occasioned by this participation. This waiver shall be effective from the date of signing.

SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____

Enjoy the Journey

By Connie Cleveland

I don't remember life before competition. My father was a tennis coach, and I started playing competitive tennis at the age of 11. My mother showed dogs before me. I showed my first dog in Junior Showmanship as an 8-year-old. The benefit of starting early is that winning and losing made no difference to me, I was raised by competitors and just learned to love competing. At my first dog show there were 4 kids in the class. We were significantly delayed waiting for the fourth child's dog to arrive from the conformation ring. I got fourth, and came out of the ring waiving the ribbon for my mother to admire while telling her, "I got fourth, and if that boy's dog hadn't shown up I'd have even gotten third!"

Although the story became one of Mom's favorites to share in later years, she did so to share my enthusiasm, never to steal my joy.

At 10, I earned my first Novice leg on our family's Maltese with 171 points.

Green ribbon in hand, I was the happiest person at the dog show! In my first summer on the junior tennis circuit, I never won a single's match. The fun of traveling, practicing and competing was so tremendous, I never noticed. My parents encouraged my enthusiasm and it was 2-3 years, as I was winning more, before I realized I'd had that long losing streak. My family lived out the plaque on our kitchen wall:

**To win the game is great,
To play the game is greater,
To love the game is greatest!**

By 14, I was dog crazy. My parents bought an 18-month-old female Golden Retriever for me that already had her CD and knew how to retrieve. Our bond was immediate. Consumed by everything Golden Retriever, I read that Jackie Mertens owned and trained the sixth female to earn both a Championship and three field stars - Ch. Topbrass Ad-Lib's Bangor *** (Qualified All-Age Field Trial Competitor). I dreamt about doing the

same with Tara. I wrote her registered name in my school notebooks to see how it looked with all those titles. It never occurred to me that I was setting a ridiculously lofty goal. My attitude was, **"There have been six, Tara should be the seventh!"** The level of difficulty was not on my radar. It was a challenge and I intended to take it! Becoming part of the competitive dog world was glorious for someone who had decided that High School was nothing short of social torture. Outside of school, life was delightful because of Tara, and the activities we pursued. I loved obedience class nights and assisted with classes. Mom and I spent countless weekends at dog shows. We became active members of the Flat River Retriever Club where I threw birds, marshalled, and competed with Tara in the monthly fun trials. Gracious club members took me seriously when I asked for help teaching Tara to "handle," a skill she'd need to run field trials and earn 3 field stars.



Tara and I were wild about each other. She never let me out of her sight, and I rarely let her out of mine. After school, she waited patiently while I studied, expecting that as soon as I finished, we would do something together, whether it was obedience in the yard, or walk to the end of the street to practice our field skills. Occasionally, I would be allowed to drive our VW Camper van to school. On those days Tara would sleep comfortably on the couch in the van while I went to class...until lunch, when I'd sneak out and

drive to the pond behind the Middle School for a bit of midday training. We were completely, 100% devoted to one another and to my goal.

Field Trials are only held in the spring and summer in Michigan. As the trials started in the spring of 1980, the needed first or second place continued to elude us. By August, as I was preparing to leave for college, with one trial left to run, I began dealing with the reality that our incredible journey was coming to an end, and we would not reach our goal.

Field trials consist of 4 tests, two on land, and two in the water. The hardest test for Tara was the third test, the water blind. On a blind retrieve, the dog does not see where the bird is placed, and the handler, using whistle and hand signals, must direct the dog to the bird. That day, Tara was affected by the wind and terrain, did not follow my directions, and I had to call her in without the bird-an automatic elimination.

I was devastated. I fought tears as I returned to the van to hide my disappointment. I had lost plenty of times, but this loss took my breath away.

Perhaps it was the combination of the loss and the failure to reach the goal that I had so relentlessly pursued. It just seemed impossible that the journey was over.

As we sat on the couch, Tara pushed herself into me, trying to lick the tears from my cheeks. Pulling her close, I assured her, "I love you just the same." Sitting there, with her wrapped in my arms, her presence and affection made the joy of the journey bigger than the heartbreak.

Several minutes later, I heard a club member calling my name. I peeked out of the van to hear, "No one could do that test, the judges have scrapped it and are starting over with another water blind."

It is uncommon, but not unusual for judges to "scrap" a test, but it seemed far too good to be true...and indeed it was. Tara was quite wonderful on the replacement water blind, and perfect in the last series, and in an ending better than any Disney movie, she won the Qualifying Stake that day and became Ch. Cimaron's Dusty Dawn UD***.

Failing to Reach a Goal

In the last 45 years, I have committed my heart and time to more than a dozen dogs. They have all taken me on incredible journeys. I have missed more goals than I have earned...

- OTCH "Alec" had a wonderful Obedience career with two tournament wins but never earned his third field star.

- *It took my first Shih-tzu, "Beep," 12 failed Utility classes to convince me that she didn't want a UD, and I shouldn't want one either.*
- *FC AFC OTCH "Ezra" was my first dog with all three championships and finished an impressive 5 National Retriever Championships, a record that no subsequent dog of mine has come close to.*
- *FC AFC OTCH "Eli" had an impressive field trial career, however, after 7 Open seconds and no win, I had given up on ever obtaining his Field Championship. He won an Open stake at the age of 10, another Disney like ending, 2 years after I had given up the goal.*
- *AFC OTCH "Aaron" never earned the last ½ point needed for his Field Championship.*
- *AFC OTCH "Caleb" lacked the necessary win for his Field Championship.*
- *AFC OTCH "Nate" had his career cut short by injury and never earned the last point needed for his Field Championship.*

Once in a Lifetime

People often say, "This is my once-in-a-lifetime dog." I understand the sentiment, but truly, every dog I've competed with has been that dog. Each dog has taken me on a unique and incredible journey, taught me amazing things, introduced me to new people, activities and places, all while playing a pivotal role in my life experience. Understanding this has changed the way I look at every dog. ***Each one brings something exceptional to the journey.***

So, in 2026, as I start my journey with "Gabe," I am once again excited, optimistic, and enthusiastic about the journey ahead. I want to avoid mistakes I've made before, communicate better than I ever have, but most importantly, give my heart to another "once in a lifetime" dog that will undoubtedly give me experiences I have never had. He's only 14-months-old, and already, I'm enjoying the journey!

As you set your own audacious goals for 2026, aim high and get excited about the journey. We look forward to helping you make steady progress. We want you to train and compete with confidence, but never forget...

"It is good to have an end to journey toward; but in the end, it is the journey that matters."



Dog Mouthing vs Biting: How To Tell The Difference (And When To Worry)

If your dog will not stop mouthing you, you are probably over it. Playful nips lose their charm quickly. What starts as harmless fun can turn into scratched arms, chewed cuffs and real frustration.

Most dog mouthing is completely normal. But when it becomes intense, frequent or paired with stiff body language, it may require training.



Photo by [Leticia Fracalossi](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Start Here: Is This Play Or A Problem?

Before diving into the reasons dogs mouth, take a moment to assess what you are actually seeing. In most cases, mouthing is playful communication. But body language and intensity matter.

It is likely play if your dog:

- Has a loose, wiggly body
- Uses light pressure and does not leave marks
- Stops when redirected
- Settles quickly once the interaction ends

This type of mouthing is common in puppies and young dogs. It is often driven by excitement, attention-seeking or leftover bite inhibition learning.

It may be a problem if your dog:

- Has stiff or tense posture
- Growls, snarls, or shows hard eye contact
- Clamps down with pressure
- Escalates when ignored or redirected

When mouthing is forceful, persistent or paired with defensive body language, it shifts from playful behavior to something that requires structured training.

Most dogs fall into the first category. The key is learning how to tell the difference and respond consistently.

Mouthing Vs Biting: The Pressure Test

Teeth touching skin can feel alarming. But the difference between mouthing and biting usually comes down to pressure and intent.

Mouthing involves controlled pressure. Your dog may grab briefly but releases quickly. If you say “ouch” or pause interaction, they soften or stop.

A true bite involves force. The dog clamps down or snaps with intent to create distance. There is little hesitation or self-control.

If your dog re-engages aggressively after correction, guards objects or shows escalating tension, that moves beyond mouthing.

Understanding body language makes the difference clear. The chart below shows common signs of offensive and defensive aggression.

AGGRESSION IN DOGS

OFFENSIVE VS DEFENSIVE

OFFENSIVE	DEFENSIVE
FORWARD, CONFIDENT AGGRESSION WHERE THE DOG MOVES TOWARD THE THREAT TO CONTROL OR INTIMIDATE	FEAR-BASED AGGRESSION WHERE THE DOG WANTS DISTANCE AND REACTS TO PROTECT THEMSELVES
 STIFF BODY	 BODY LOWERED
 LIP CURLED	 MOUTH CORNERS PULLED BACK
 EARS FORWARD	 EARS BACK
 HARD STARE	 DILATED PUPILS
 TAIL HIGH	 TAIL TUCKED
 LUNGE POSTURE	 LEANING AWAY

 **Canine Journal**® Learn more: <http://www.caninejournal.com/dog-attacks-by-breed/>

Graphic by Tara Maurer for Canine Journal, © Cover Story Media, Inc. 2025.

Note: If your dog shows signs of aggression, consult a veterinarian or certified trainer.

Is Dog Mouthing Normal?

In most cases, yes. Puppies use their mouths to explore the world and practice bite control, a process known as bite inhibition.

When they play with littermates, they constantly mouth one another. If one puppy bites too hard, the other yelps and stops playing. That feedback teaches them how much pressure is acceptable.

When puppies come home, they often continue practicing this behavior with their new family.

For many dogs, mouthing is simply instinct, curiosity or leftover puppy habits. However, normal does not always mean acceptable.

When mouthing continues into adulthood, becomes forceful or turns into a primary way to demand attention, it can signal under-stimulation, stress, lack of training or frustration. That is when this normal behavior crosses the line into something that needs guidance.

Dog Mouthing At A Glance

- Most common in puppies and adolescent dogs
- Often driven by play, excitement or attention-seeking
- More likely when a dog is under-stimulated or overstimulated
- Rarely a sign of true aggression
- Usually improves with consistent training and redirection

Most mouthing behaviors are manageable. The key is understanding why your dog is doing it.

What Exactly Is Dog Mouthing?

Dog mouthing refers to gentle biting or nibbling without full force. It is different from aggressive biting and is most often linked to play, excitement or communication.

Puppies use their mouths to explore and practice bite inhibition, and some dogs continue that habit into adolescence or adulthood. While the behavior is normal, it can become frustrating if it is frequent or forceful.

Understanding why your dog is mouthing is the key to stopping it.

7 Reasons Dogs Mouth People

If your dog will not stop mouthing you, there is usually a reason behind it. Mouthing is rarely random. In most cases, it serves a purpose, whether that purpose is play, communication or learned behavior.

Below are the most common reasons dogs mouth their owners.

1. They Are Playing

Play is one of the most common causes of mouthing.

As puppies, dogs use their mouths to initiate play with littermates. That habit often carries over into adolescence and sometimes adulthood. Moving hands and feet can be especially tempting targets.

While playful mouthing is usually harmless, it can escalate if boundaries are not taught. Dogs that have not learned consistent redirection may continue using their mouths during excitement.

2. They Are Teething

In puppies under six months old, teething is a major factor.

Between three and six months of age, puppies lose their baby teeth and grow adult teeth. Pressure on the gums can be soothing, which leads to increased chewing and mouthing.

Without appropriate chew outlets, puppies may redirect that need toward hands, sleeves or pant legs.

3. They Want Attention

Dogs quickly learn what gets a reaction.

If mouthing causes you to look at them, speak to them or push them away, it may be reinforcing the behavior. Even negative attention can feel rewarding.

Attention-seeking mouthing is especially common in adult dogs that are bored, under-stimulated or seeking interaction.

4. They Are Overstimulated Or Excited

Some dogs mouth when their arousal level rises.

During high-energy moments such as play sessions, greetings or outdoor activity, excitement can spill over into nipping or grabbing. This is particularly common in adolescent dogs that have not yet developed impulse control.

If mouthing increases during high-energy situations, overstimulation may be the trigger.

5. They Have Strong Instincts To Chase Or Grab

Certain breeds are genetically wired to chase, grab or control movement.

Herding breeds may nip at ankles or clothing as a way to manage motion. Retrievers and other working breeds may instinctively grab with their mouths during excitement.

If your dog mouths primarily when you move quickly or turn away, instinct may be playing a role.

6. They Are Grooming Or "Cobbing" You

Some dogs gently nibble their owners using their front teeth, a behavior often called cobbing. This type of mouthing resembles social grooming between dogs.

Cobbing is typically light, relaxed and accompanied by calm body language. It is usually a sign of affection rather than play or frustration.

7. The Behavior Has Been Reinforced

In many cases, mouthing continues because it works.

If the behavior results in play, laughter, talking or even mild scolding, the dog may interpret that response as rewarding. Dogs repeat behaviors that create interaction.

Whether the initial cause was play, teething or instinct, reinforcement is often what keeps the habit going.

How To Stop Dog Mouthing: A Step-By-Step Plan

Stopping mouthing is not about punishment. It is about teaching your dog what to do instead. Consistency, timing and clear boundaries are what change behavior.

Follow this framework.

Step 1: Interrupt Without Reinforcing

Dogs repeat behaviors that produce results. If mouthing leads to movement, noise, laughter or engagement, it becomes rewarding.

Many owners accidentally reinforce mouthing by reacting quickly or emotionally. From your dog's perspective, any response can feel like interaction.

When Mouthing Begins

- Stop moving
- Avoid eye contact
- Keep your voice neutral
- Slowly remove your hand

Avoid

- Yelling
- Rapid arm movements
- Pushing your dog away
- Turning it into a wrestling match

Key Takeaway: Stillness removes the reward. If there is no payoff, the behavior begins to lose value.

Step 2: Redirect To An Appropriate Outlet

Dogs mouth because they have an urge to use their mouth. If you remove the behavior without offering an alternative, the urge remains.

Redirection works because it teaches your dog what to do instead of what not to do.

Keep Nearby

- Durable chew toys
- Tug ropes
- Frozen teething toys for puppies

What To Do

- Calmly present a chew toy or tug rope
- Place the toy directly in their mouth
- Engage briefly with the toy to build interest

Avoid

- Waiting too long to redirect
- Tossing the toy across the room
- Turning redirection into chaotic play

Key Takeaway: Replace the behavior immediately. Timing teaches your dog what is acceptable.

Step 3: Teach Bite Inhibition

Some dogs understand redirection but still struggle with pressure control. They may mouth gently at first, then gradually increase force during excitement.

Bite inhibition is the skill that teaches a dog how hard is too hard. Puppies normally learn this from littermates.

When play becomes painful, the other puppy yelps and stops interacting. Adult dogs can still learn this skill, but they need consistent feedback.

When Pressure Is Too Hard

- Say "gentle" in a calm, firm tone
- Or give a brief "ouch" or pained sound
- Immediately pause interaction

The pause matters more than the sound. It shows your dog that harder pressure ends the fun.

If They Soften

- Resume calm play
- Praise lightly
- Continue monitoring pressure

This teaches your dog that softer mouths keep interaction going.

If They Escalate

- End the interaction
- Stand up or walk away
- Remove access to attention for one to two minutes

Avoid yelling or scolding. Emotional reactions can increase arousal rather than reduce it.

Key Takeaway: Your dog learns through consequences. Gentle pressure continues play. Hard pressure ends it.

Step 4: Reinforce The Behavior You Want

Dogs repeat behaviors that earn rewards. If mouthing consistently earns interaction, it will continue. If calm behavior earns attention instead, your dog will begin choosing calm behavior more often.

Many owners focus heavily on correcting mouthing but forget to actively reward the moments when their dog gets it right. Those moments are where real progress happens.

When Your Dog Approaches Calmly

- Offer verbal praise
- Give gentle petting
- Deliver a small treat
- Initiate calm play

Reward quickly so your dog clearly connects the behavior with the outcome.

During Greetings

Excited greetings are a common trigger for mouthing. If your dog greets you without grabbing:

- Acknowledge immediately
- Reinforce with attention
- Keep your tone steady and calm

If mouthing begins, reset and try again.

Encourage Independent Toy Use

If your dog chooses a toy instead of your hand:

- Praise immediately
- Join briefly in structured play

The more you reward toy selection, the more likely your dog is to repeat it.

Avoid Overstimulating Rewards

- Do not reward calm behavior with chaotic wrestling
- Avoid high-pitched excitement if arousal is already high
- Keep reinforcement appropriate to the energy level

Overstimulation can undo progress.

Key Takeaway: Reward the behavior you want more of. Calm interaction must become more valuable than mouthing.

Step 5: Manage Arousal Before It Escalates

Mouthing often increases when excitement rises. As arousal builds, impulse control drops. Even well-trained dogs may grab, nip or mouth when they are overstimulated.

If you wait until your dog is fully amped up, correction becomes harder. The goal is to interrupt the build-up before it turns into grabbing.

Watch For Early Signs Of Overstimulation

- Jumping or bouncing
- Rapid movement
- Difficulty settling
- Increased vocalization
- Grabbing at clothing during play

These behaviors often appear before mouthing intensifies.

What To Do

- Pause play briefly to lower intensity
- Ask for a simple cue such as "sit" or "down"
- Offer a structured toy instead of free wrestling
- Shift to a calmer activity

Short, intentional breaks prevent escalation.

During Play Sessions

- Keep tug games structured
- Use clear start and stop cues
- End play while your dog is still controlled

Stopping before your dog tips into chaos builds better habits.

Avoid

- Roughhousing without boundaries
- Encouraging jumping or grabbing during play
- Letting excitement spiral without interruption

Key Takeaway: Mouthing often starts when excitement peaks. Lower arousal early to prevent escalation.

Step 6: Meet Physical & Mental Needs

Mouthing is often a symptom of excess energy or unmet mental stimulation. Dogs that lack structured exercise or enrichment will seek stimulation on their own. Hands and clothing are convenient targets.

Daily structure should include:

- Physical exercise appropriate for age and breed
- Short training sessions
- Food puzzles or enrichment toys
- Sniff walks or scent-based games

Mental fatigue reduces impulsive behavior.

Key Takeaway: A tired brain and body reduce mouthy behavior. If mouthing spikes in the evening, it may signal that your dog needs more structured outlets during the day.

Step 7: Stay Consistent Across The Household

Dogs learn through patterns. Inconsistent responses create inconsistent behavior.

If one person allows playful nipping and another corrects it, your dog receives mixed signals. All household members should:

- Use the same cue
- Respond the same way
- Redirect consistently
- Reward calm behavior

Consistency accelerates learning.

When To Seek Professional Help

Most mouthing improves with consistent training.

Consult a professional if:

- Mouthing escalates into hard biting
- It is paired with guarding or aggression
- It appears defensive or unpredictable
- It does not improve after consistent effort

A certified trainer or veterinarian can evaluate whether stress, fear or behavioral issues are contributing.

Best Toys To Redirect Dog Mouthing

Redirection only works if your dog has a satisfying alternative. Not all toys are equally effective for mouthing behavior.

The goal is to provide something durable, engaging and appropriate for your dog's age and chewing style.

Durable Rubber Chew Toys

Heavy-duty rubber toys such as KONG-style toys allow dogs to chew safely and release tension.

They are especially effective when:

- Stuffed with food or peanut butter
- Frozen for longer engagement
- Used during high-excitement moments

For teething puppies and high-energy dogs, this type of outlet can dramatically reduce grabbing behavior.

Rope Toys For Structured Tug

Rope toys are ideal for dogs who mouth during play.

Use tug in a structured way:

- Start and stop on cue
- End play before arousal spikes
- Avoid chaotic wrestling

This teaches control while still meeting the urge to grab.

Puppy Teething Toys

For puppies under six months, mouthing is often driven by gum discomfort.

Look for:

- Softer rubber designed for puppies
- Freezable toys
- Age-appropriate sizing

Cold pressure can relieve teething discomfort and reduce the urge to mouth hands.

Puzzle Toys & Treat Dispensers

Sometimes mouthing is boredom.

Use mental enrichment tools to help reduce excess energy:

- Snuffle mats
- Food puzzles and slow feeders
- Treat-dispensing balls

A mentally tired dog is less likely to grab at sleeves.

Safe Edible Chews

Natural chews such as bully sticks, dental chews, or yak chews can satisfy a strong urge to gnaw. Always supervise and match the chew to your dog's size and intensity.

Bonus Tip: Rotate toy. Rotating toys every few days keeps them novel and reduces boredom-driven mouthing.

5 Common Mistakes That Make Mouthing Worse

When your dog grabs your hand, the instinct to react is strong. It is annoying. It is uncomfortable. And sometimes it feels automatic to say "no" or pull away.

But certain reactions can actually make mouthing more persistent. If progress feels stalled, one of these habits may be getting in the way.

1. Yelling, Scolding Or Getting Rough

It is tempting to raise your voice when teeth are involved; however, harsh reactions often increase arousal rather than reduce it. Some dogs become more excited. Others become stressed or defensive.

Mouthing is usually rooted in play or attention-seeking, not dominance. Adding intensity to the situation rarely helps. Calm correction is far more effective than force.

2. Pulling Your Hand Away Quickly

When teeth touch skin, your reflex is to yank your hand back. The problem is that sudden movement can trigger chase instincts. What started as mild mouthing can quickly turn into a grabbing game.

Move slowly instead. Remove the reward, then redirect.

3. Using Physical Punishment

Holding a dog's mouth shut or tapping their nose does not teach control. **It teaches fear.**

Physical corrections can increase anxiety and erode trust. In some cases, they escalate behavior instead of reducing it. Training should clarify boundaries, not create intimidation.

4. Ignoring The Behavior Without A Plan

Ignoring mouthing can work as part of a structured response. Ignoring it completely does not.

Without redirection and reinforcement of calm behavior, your dog has no clear alternative. Consistency matters more than silence.

5. Reinforcing It Without Realizing

This one surprises many owners. If mouthing leads to laughter, talking, pushing away or accidental play, it becomes rewarding. Even negative attention can feel like interaction.

If mouthing works, your dog will keep using it.

How Long Does It Take To Stop Mouthing?

This is one of the most common questions owners ask. The honest answer depends on your dog's age, history and how consistent the training has been.

Mouthing is a learned behavior. That means it can be changed, but it will not disappear overnight.

Puppies

For puppies, mouthing is often tied to development and teething. With consistent redirection and clear feedback, most puppies show noticeable improvement within a few weeks.

By six to eight months of age, many grow out of the worst of the behavior as impulse control improves. That said, inconsistency can extend the timeline.

Adolescent Dogs

Adolescence, typically between six and eighteen months, is when mouthing can spike again. Impulse control is still developing, and excitement runs high. Progress may feel uneven during this phase.

With structure and repetition, improvement is steady but may take several weeks to a few months. This stage requires patience more than force.

Adult Dogs

In adult dogs, mouthing often persists because it has been reinforced. If the behavior has worked for months or years, it may take longer to fade. However, adult dogs are fully capable of learning new patterns when responses are consistent.

Improvement may take a few weeks, but entrenched habits can require longer-term management.

What Speeds Up Progress

- Immediate and consistent redirection
- Clear household rules
- Meeting physical and mental needs
- Reinforcing calm behavior daily

Key Takeaway: Most mouthing improves with consistent training. The timeline depends less on your dog's personality and more on how predictable your response is.

Puppy Mouthing vs. Adult Dog Mouthing

All puppies mouth, it's completely normal. They're like tiny toddlers who want to explore everything with their mouths. So, if your puppy is mouthing your hands, chewing your sleeves, or nipping at your ankles, they're just doing what comes naturally.

Adult mouthing is different. By adulthood, a dog should understand pressure control.

When mouthing continues, it is usually because the behavior has been reinforced, not because the dog "has not grown out of it." In adult dogs, mouthing reflects habit, overstimulation, unmet needs or attention-seeking.

Quick Reality Check

If your dog's mouthing is gentle, controlled and does not escalate, you may not feel the need to stop it completely.

However, consider a few things:

- Will your dog mouth guests the same way?
- Would a child interpret it as playful?
- Could excitement increase pressure unexpectedly?
- Does your dog mouth during overstimulation or frustration?

Even mild mouthing can become problematic if it is inconsistent or unpredictable. You do not have to eliminate every playful nibble. But you should be confident your dog has reliable pressure control and responds immediately to redirection.

If you are unsure, it is safer to teach boundaries early than to undo a habit later.

My Personal Experience With Dog Mouthing

When I first adopted my dog Rio, he used to greet me with full-body excitement, spinning, jumping, and mouthing at my hands. It was never aggressive, but it was intense and sometimes uncomfortable.

I fixed this by withdrawing attention. No petting or eye contact. No engagement until he settled.

Within weeks, the difference was noticeable. Today, he greets me with enthusiasm, but the mouthing is gone.

There was another behavior that initially confused me: cobbing. Rio would gently nibble on blankets, toys, and occasionally my leg. Unlike the excited mouthing at the door, it was soft, deliberate, and affectionate.

Learning to distinguish between overstimulated mouthing and gentle cobbing helped me respond appropriately instead of overcorrecting harmless behavior.

As he matured and settled in, even the cobbing faded. I will admit, I miss that one a little.

When Mouthing Becomes A Problem

Mouthing is often normal. But here's the truth: sometimes, it crosses the line. Mouthing becomes a problem when it shifts from playful communication to forceful, persistent or frustration-driven behavior.

So, how do you know when mouthing goes from harmless to problematic? Your dog's mouthing might be a problem if:

- **It's getting rough.** If your dog is putting more pressure on you than you're comfortable with, even if they're not breaking the skin, that's a sign they haven't learned proper bite inhibition.
- **It happens constantly.** Mouthing all the time, out of nowhere, or in every interaction? That's a behavioral issue.
- **They mouth when they're frustrated.** If your dog mouths you when you stop petting them, take away a toy, or say no to something, that's not playful, it's pushy.
- **It's paired with growling, staring, or stiff body language.** These are red flags that your dog might not be playing at all. If you see signs of tension or discomfort, it's time to take it seriously.

At this point, the issue is no longer developmental. It reflects impulse control gaps, overstimulation or learned attention-seeking patterns. If consistent training does not improve the behavior, further evaluation may be necessary.

Frequently Asked Questions

Still have questions about your dog's mouthing habits? Here are some of the most common questions dog parents ask, with helpful answers based on training advice and expert insight.

Is Mouthing A Normal Behavior For Puppies?

Yes. Mouthing is a normal part of puppy development.

Puppies explore with their mouths and learn bite inhibition through play. Teething can also increase mouthing behavior. However, normal does not mean it should be ignored.

Early training matters. The sooner you teach redirection and pressure control, the less likely the behavior will continue into adolescence or adulthood. Provide appropriate chew outlets and respond consistently from day one.

Is Canine Mouthing Tied To Aggression?

In most cases, no. Playful mouthing is common and typically involves loose body language and controlled pressure. Aggression involves stiffness, tension and intent to create distance.

If you are worried that your dog's mouthing is tied to aggression, be sure to keep an eye out for any behaviors such as snarling, growling, showing their teeth, snapping, stiff posture, intense staring, biting with pressure, and any other alarming behaviors. If these behaviors accompany mouthing, consult a veterinarian or certified trainer for evaluation.

Why Does My Dog Mouth Me But Not Other People?

If your dog mouths you but not others, it usually means the behavior has been reinforced in your interactions. Even small reactions such as talking, pulling away or engaging in play can reward mouthing.

Dogs are also more likely to mouth the people they feel most comfortable with. Familiarity lowers inhibition. If mouthing consistently earns attention from you, your dog will continue directing it toward you.

Should I Let My Dog Mouth During Play?

It depends on control and consistency. If your dog uses gentle pressure, responds immediately to cues and never escalates, some owners choose to allow light mouthing during structured play. However, this requires reliable bite inhibition and clear boundaries.

The risk comes when rules are inconsistent. If mouthing is allowed sometimes but corrected other times, confusion can prolong the behavior.

If children, guests, or inexperienced handlers are involved, it is safer to teach that human skin is not part of play.

Is Dog Mouthing A Sign Of Dominance?

Modern behavioral science does not support the idea that mouthing is an attempt to assert dominance. Mouthing is usually linked to excitement, attention-seeking, teething, or overstimulation.

Labeling it as dominance can lead to unnecessary force-based corrections, which often increase stress rather than improve behavior. Focus on structure and reinforcement, not hierarchy myths.

Why Does My Dog Mouth When I Stop Petting Them?

This often reflects frustration or learned attention-seeking.

If petting consistently leads to more petting, your dog may use mouthing as a way to continue the interaction. This is especially common in high-energy or easily overstimulated dogs.

Teaching calm transitions helps. Pause petting before arousal increases, reinforce relaxed behavior and avoid re-engaging immediately after mouthing.

Over time, your dog learns that calm behavior continues attention. Mouthing does not.



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