

How to Stop your Kitten Biting and Scratching

It's all fun and games with your sweet, adorable kitten—until her tiny teeth sink into your skin, that is. After a play session that's left your hand scratched up, you might wonder whether you can deter this behavior with kitten training. Fortunately, learning how to discipline a kitten *is* possible, as long as you're consistent with your method.

It's second nature. If you're worried that the rescue kitty you've brought home is only out for blood, remember that it's completely normal behavior for your animal to nip, notes Molloy.

"Kittens, like babies of many species, explore their world by mouth," she explains.

But luckily for you (and your fingers!), kitten biting naturally decreases as your cat ages and usually disappears by 12 months of age, she adds.

"Kittens bite because they're teething, which happens when they're 2 weeks old, and then again around 4 months," she says.

Biting is learning. The other big reason kitties use their teeth so much is because they're playing, says Molloy.

"And playtime with littermates helps to teach a kitten bite inhibition, which means if you bite your sibling too hard, you'll be avoided at best—or bitten right back at worst," she points out.

If your cat was taken from her litter too early, she may have a harder bite than those who remained with their brothers and sisters for at least 8 weeks, she adds. The bottom line: Whatever your kitten's bite inhibition level, if she sees your hands and feet as playthings—watch out.

"You're likely going to get bitten," says Molloy.

So, it is important to teach your kitten which objects are appropriate to bite and play with.

No fingers (or toes). "It's cute as heck to see a kitten jump and try to catch ahold of something to play with, but it's not funny when she decides one of your body parts is a toy for her enjoyment," says Molloy. If you're ready to play with your kitten, offer an object that's designed for it, she suggests. There are a variety of toys you can use to engage your kitten in some playtime. One option is an [LED Laser toy](#) that can keep your kitten bouncing and pouncing away instead of swatting and biting at your hands. Or if your kitten prefers being able to chase and actually catch their toys, a set of [Hartz Just for Cats Midnight Crazies balls](#) might be just the ticket.

Use playtime as bonding time. Try to steer your pet in the right direction by keeping a variety of appropriate cat toys on hand. But, as Malloy warns, "Make sure you don't leave your kitten unsupervised with a toy that can be destroyed and/or swallowed." Playtime should also be bonding time between you and your kitty. Try using a [wand toy](#) that gives your kitten the opportunity to grab and bite something other than your hands, she adds.

Teach gentle play. With a few simple steps, you can create a safe and fun play environment for you and your cat. According to Malloy, here's what to do when your kitten bites you:

How to Stop a Kitten from Biting:

- Say "OW!" in a loud but not overwhelming voice.
- Gently remove your body part from your kitten's grasp. "It may feel counterintuitive, but try to remove her slowly, as quickly snatching your hand away just makes you an even more intriguing target," she explains.
- Place her carefully on the floor and/or redirect her attention to a toy.
- If she doesn't come back and nip again, reward her with play. "But don't pet or snuggle her at this time, because when a kitten is in play/prey mode, anything that comes her way is fair game to be pounced on and bitten."
- If she does try to bite again, simply repeat the procedure.

Stick to your guns. Consistency is key when you want to curb kitten biting.

"Your cat can't be expected to understand that it's okay to nip sometimes or with certain people, and not with others," says Molloy.

Eventually, your kitten will learn that "OW!" means, "Let go." And she'll soon realize your body part isn't really a fun toy. Your goal, of course, is to adopt a zero-tolerance policy for teeth on skin, but this *does not* mean getting physical with your pet, points out Molloy.

"Physical punishment just makes cats frightened of people and is seldom connected with what they see as perfectly normal behavior," she notes.

So, if you are dealing with kitten biting, just remember that patience is key, along with lots of fun toys!

Please google "Teaching your kitten not to bite and scratch", for additional articles and videos.