

Biting Resources

Once children start daycare and begin interacting with other children, they may go through a biting phase. They're still learning to share their space and toys and may express their frustration by biting their peers. Biting can be a normal part of childhood development.

Children often bite to fulfill a need or cope with a challenge. Oftentimes, reasons include:

- Lack of language skills: cannot express their feelings (frustration, joy, etc)
- Sensory overload: overwhelmed by environment (too many lights or sounds)
- Tests and trials: experimenting to see what will happen and what consequences will occur
- Energy relief
- Teething

Correct and Redirect

The first step in teaching a child not to bite is to correct the behavior when you witness it. Be calm but firm, "Ouch! No. We do not bite. Biting hurts!" Once you have corrected the behavior, redirect the child's attention.

For example: if they bite another child because they want a toy the other child has, correct the behavior and redirect their attention by offering them something else to play with.

If they bite another child because they are in their personal space, correct the behavior as well as explaining to the other child that personal space and not getting in each other's faces is very important.

If they bite due to teething, you can also tell them that you are going to get them something they can safely bite and offer a teething toy.

It is important that you avoid physical discipline- hitting or biting a child who has bitten only teaches a child that the behavior is okay.

Encourage them to express themselves

Children do not bite for no reason. Often, they are biting out of frustration. If the child is verbal, encourage them to express their frustration with words. For example, if your child wants a turn with a toy but it is being used, encourage them to use their words. "I would like a turn with the toy, please." "toy please!" etc. You can explain to them that the feeling they have is frustration.

Positive Reinforcement

Children are receptive to positive reinforcement. Validating a child's efforts is the best way to ensure appropriate behavior. When the child expresses themselves instead of biting, acknowledge their good behavior by saying something like, "Thank you for using your words! I love when you express yourself." Positively interacting with children reinforces good behavior, versus only calling out negative behavior.

At Home: Praise a child at home when they do something nice or good. Remind them they should do the same good behavior at daycare/school! Tell them it would make their teachers happy if they acted the same at school.

Positive Affirmations and Rules:

You may find success by talking to your child on the way to school every morning. Give your child positive affirmations. "You are kind. You are helpful. You are loved. You have teachers to want to help you learn and grow. Today is going to be an awesome day."

Remind them of the behavior they should be using at school. "Do take toys from each other? No. Do we bite/hit? No. Do we express ourselves with words? Yes!"

Ouch!

Often, children do not realize that biting actually hurts. They may not quite understand what the word "hurts" even means. It can be helpful to use the phrase "Ouch!" when relaying the message.

A great book to go along with this message is:

Teeth Are Not for Biting (Part of the Best Behavior Series) by Elizabeth Verdick

https://www.thriftbooks.com/w/teeth-are-not-for-biting-best-behavior-series_elizabeth-verdick/247119/item/2265906/?gclid=Cj0KCQjw7KqZBhCBARIsAI-fTKLtZqvRSqIQ18sZ7jrrAEtUSuGaPgLaC3_6DQtBM-4qsqoNNcXMIJYaAg0CEALw_wcB#idiq=2265906&edition=3289259

Additional Resources:

<https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/families/understanding-and-responding-children-who-bite>

<https://www.zerotothree.org/resource/toddler-and-biting-finding-the-right-response/>

http://www.lifespanchildcare.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/11-16-12_Biting_FACT_SHEET.pdf