

# Living with Dogs

**Positive Training Fetches Positive Results!**

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## **Biting Pant Legs & Ankles**

Chasing your moving feet and biting ankles and pant legs is a natural dog behavior but it can be irritating. Dogs mouth and nip because it's instinctive for dogs to chase and bite moving things and because they receive attention for this behavior. How can you train your pup not to bite your ankles?

Start by observing the behavior to see if you can spot patterns or triggers. If you find that the puppy nips your clothing only at certain times -- when he's over stimulated or tired, for example, or when you first get home or when you put the leash on you can track this and make a plan based on these patterns. You will need to learn to observe your pup and keep track of the incidence of the behavior to find patterns or triggers. Once you can identify the triggers you can be proactive and plan for them.

Then define what you want the puppy to do instead. Choose an alternate, preferred behavior such as "Walk nicely beside me."

3. Manage the situation so undesired behavior becomes impossible or it is not rewarding to the pup.

### **Action Plan**

If the puppy or dog pounces, STOP MOVING. As soon as the puppy pauses, click and treat - reinforce the pause in activity. Start walking... FREEZE the moment his teeth touch your ankles or clothes. Using this technique, the dog learns that walking beside mom is more rewarding than biting ankles and pant legs.

Another approach would be to MANAGE the situation and put the puppy somewhere where he can't bite you. You might also proactively have a toy handy to give the puppy to hold in his mouth instead of your ankle. You could also use a Negative Marker like "Uh-oh!" and give him a time out in his crate. Your timing needs to be simultaneous with the behavior for a Negative Marker to stop the behavior. A Negative Marker is not punishment and should be consistent and unemotional. Punishment does not encourage good behavior, reinforcement is much more effective.

Train the preferred behavior and practice frequently. Repetition and reward helps to condition behavior to the point where the puppy automatically offers the good and rewarding behavior. Teach your pup it's fun and reinforcing to walk by your side. Reinforce heavily for any steps at your side -- this is a great foundation for loose-leash walking. Dogs will repeat behavior that brings them lots of rewards.