

smell and taste their environment. At nine weeks old, applying the OUT OF SIGHT... rule, I followed Tugger around the house for 25 minutes. In that time he investigated and started to mouth and chew on 12 different things, including plants, chair legs and furniture, items on a coffee table and electric cords. I had to stop him.

To stop investigative chewing you can use a product called Bitter Apple®. It is very nasty tasting stuff that comes in a cream ointment or liquid spray. You put it on items you don't want your dog to gnaw on. It holds its power for about four hours and will have to be reapplied for the determined investigator. Reapply often to keep it strong.

Bitter appetizer

For the Portuguese who is not too phased by a little bitterness, you may need to give him what I call the bitter appetizer. This will give your dog a truly negative association with the smell and taste of Bitter Apple®. This should be done before an aggressive chewer decides Bitter Apple® isn't that bad after all. If I have a puppy who is a real investigative chewer, I will give the appetizer as soon as I see the trait in the puppy. Here is how it works. Take a piece of cotton or a Kleenex and saturate it with Bitter Apple®. Next, open your puppy's mouth and place the cotton in his mouth. Close his mouth and hold it shut for the count of three. Then let go and allow the puppy to spit out the cotton. I usually do it a second time. Then give a cracker or something to get the horrible taste out of his mouth. Most dogs who have this done to them have a memory of the taste and smell and they don't forget it. When your dog gets a whiff of something that has been sprayed with Bitter Apple®, he knows to leave it alone.

NOTE: In the process of teaching your dog what is right and wrong to chew on, be sure you never scold for something that was destroyed four hours ago, or ten minutes ago. You did not apply the OUT OF SIGHT... rule. So it was your fault, not his.

The only scolding that is effective for learning is that which is done when the dog is in the process of chewing. Replace objects with something acceptable to chomp on and use Bitter Apple® where needed.

Caution: If you have something you do not wish to use Bitter Apple® on, then you must put it out of your puppy's reach. Do not use the spray on plants. They should be put up out of the way.

Puppy proofing

To help keep your puppy out of trouble, do a thorough perusal of your home to see the potential dangers lurking there. Get on the floor at puppy level and look around. What do you see that your puppy sees? If it is something that can be dangerous to chew or touch, remove it or use the BitterApple®. In some cases animal repellents smell distasteful enough to keep a dog away.

Puppy biting

Biting should not be confused with chewing. Since the Portuguese Water Dog's instincts tell him to use his mouth, he has to be taught at a very early age how. Most biting should be discouraged with one exception.

When a dog is a very young puppy (six to 11 weeks), he will start to use his mouth on people and other dogs. At this stage in his development it can be considered important for him to do so. He is testing his bite. As a

The techniques of using Bitter Apple® to deter aggressive chewing come from a small booklet called SuperPuppy® by Peter Volmer, published in 1988. There are other classic tips for the new puppy owner in the little booklet including step-by-step information on training a baby pup.





puppy tests his bite on your hand, let him. When the biting gets too hard, stop it by saying "OUCH!" in a loud, high-pitched voice. Keep your hand where it is and let him remove his mouth from you. Your puppy will be startled. You are letting him know it is unacceptable to bite on humans. With some dogs this is all that is needed to discourage biting forever. The Portuguese Water Dog is a mouth-oriented breed, however, and most will continue their mouth experimentation.

Anti-biting techniques (After 11 weeks)

When a puppy is 11 weeks old, all attempts at biting should be stopped. I have talked with breeders and behaviorists and trainers and have gotten many different suggestions on how to stop a dog from biting you. The anti-biting techniques I am going to give you come from many sources and have worked for someone at some time. Most everyone agrees you should start with the most gentle method first. If after three attempts it is obvious that the technique is not effective, try something else.

- 1) Replace your hand with something he is allowed to put his mouth on.
- 2) Simply get up and walk away, ending the biting game your puppy is trying on you.
- 3) Make a growl sound. This becomes a warning. Follow with #4 if the growl alone is not effective.
- 4) A harsh verbal reprimand, "Stop it" or "Anh Anh," and then continue what you were doing.
- 5) Gently close his mouth with your hand and give a verbal reprimand.
- 6) Push the finger(s) he is biting further into the mouth, to the point where he tries to get away from your hand.
- 7) Take your dog by the collar or scruff of the neck and give him a little shake with a verbal reprimand. (Some dogs require a more forceful shake.) Then walk away from your puppy.
- 8) Grasp your dog by the cheeks, lift his front feet off

the ground, and look him right in the eyes as you give a strong reprimand. Then hold him there until he averts his eyes. It is important that your dog look away first. If your PWD is biting because he is testing for pack leadership then this technique establishes that you are head of the household, not him.

- 9) If the puppy is running after feet and is an ankle biter. Stand still. The movement factor has been removed and the game is no longer interesting. #3 and #4 can also be implemented. And until this is resolved don't walk around your puppy in bare feet.

Caution: Care must be taken never to do any of these techniques out of anger. You are a lot stronger than a PWD and excess of any kind could hurt your puppy. Also, on the techniques you use when you approach your dog with hands over his face, be aware, you could develop a dog who is hand shy.

Gaining control

Some young puppies during early training will display temper tantrums. Expressing his annoyance and dislike at being made to do something he doesn't want to do, he will thrash and nip and scream, trying to escape your control. As an owner, you will sometimes see this when you are discouraging nipping. A simple time out in the crate may be affective. Dispassionately place the pup in the crate to allow him to calm down. Let him out after a short period and put him back if the craziness starts again.

Another way to get control of a small puppy is to hold him in a bear hug, firmly confining him next to your

body while he attempts to struggle. A dog may have such a violent out-of-control temper tantrum that he will scream, growl and thrash. Hold firmly and keep your face away from his teeth. No need to say a thing here. Be wary when he stops struggling and you lighten your grip, he may start again. Hold on. Once he is relaxed and under control, he can be released. This is a way of showing your dog that temper tantrums are ineffective and that you have the upper hand and are in control.

Mouthy behaviors

As your dog matures he learns what is acceptable to chew and bite.

Some PWDs will still use their mouths in other often strange ways. These behaviors are what I call "mouthy".

- A Portuguese will open his mouth and sort of snap in your direction. Peculiar sounds often come out of his mouth when he does this. Or, he may sit and bark right in your face. This fresh behavior is usually a way of demanding attention. Indulging your pup by playing or giving attention will encourage the behavior. Ignoring it will often make it go away. When he looks at you, look away, or simply put him in his crate for time out.
- During play the mouth is almost always used. When this breed knows its biting limits, the mouth play is usually quick and light. Care should be taken that this kind of play does not escalate, especially around children. Go back to the anti-biting techniques if necessary.
- Ripping and tearing are other mouthy outlets. Newspapers, tissues, and toilet paper are perennial favorites. If there is more than one PWD in a household, they will quickly learn this annoying habit from each other. If you are lax about watching (OUT OF SIGHT...rule?) and keeping things off limits, you can use the bitter appetizer with the paper product they

love so much.

- Tug-of-War seems to be an ideal way for a Portuguese Water Dog to have his cake and eat it too. He gets to use his mouth and play at the same time. But most people agree that tug-of-war is not an advisable game to play unless it never gets out of control and you emphatically know how to end each session as the winner. At no time during this struggle game should the dog put his teeth on you, even by accident. In a household full of children most experts seem to say absolutely no tug-of-war.

Chronic retriever

Many a PWD develops retrieving behaviors. He needs to use his mouth, and therefore, collects and carries things all around the house. This behavior can be a harmless nuisance and stopped if you feel it is offensive. Or, if you are of a mind to do obedience, or water training, it can be encouraged. Just keep in mind whatever he is retrieving should not be chewed on unless it is one of his chew bones. The best way to stop a chronic retriever is not to have things around for him to retrieve.

If you have a compulsive retriever it is wise for you to teach the command "drop." This can be done by doing a trade. Have your dog give up what he has, even if you have to physically remove it from his mouth, then give your dog something better.

Sometimes give the original item back to him. If you don't, the lesson will be, "What I have in my mouth I won't be able to keep." And if what you have for a trade isn't as enticing as what he has in his mouth, you could easily get a game of keep-away. But if your dog knows he might be getting his item back, you are less likely to have a problem.