

"MY PUPPY IS BITING MY ANKLES AND FEET WHEN I WALK!"

This is a very common, and annoying, behavior often engaged in by puppies targeting their owners. Remember how a puppy thinks in almost all situations - "can I play with this? Lets run some puppy tests and find out!"

Puppy sees moving legs, runs experiment number 1, bite/hang on, see what happens. Typical human reaction is to shake leg, repeatedly saying "stop it!" while moving limb around. Puppy interpretation: "She loves this! Moving her leg, making play sounds, my owner is having as much fun as me!" You can see the conundrum.

Best solution, first time this happens, (which typically, by the time the owner is asking this question, has long since passed!) STOP MOVING. Cross arms, stand perfectly still. Look at your watch, for at least 3 - 5 minutes. Human conception of time is very skewed. 10 seconds feels like 1 minute to most people. In order for this solution to work, you must also be dress defensively, i.e., puppy proof clothing. Feet are covered with some kind of shoe (caution: any moving parts of foot gear are a target) and socks, impenetrable pants, best choice true denim. Jogging pants, leggings, sweat pants, anything with a stretch material, are easily penetrated. No dangling clothing items, like scarves or tassels. No sweaters that can be damaged quickly by sharp puppy teeth pulling threads. Once appropriately dressed, you can stand firm and give NO REACTION AT ALL to the ankle biting. In this case, you fail to be a fun object, and puppy will move on. Any response at all is interpreted as engagement from the puppy.

I have also found in twenty five years of working with people and their puppies, telling a human being to do nothing is like asking them to fly! Try it, it really does work!

If the puppy has been ankle biting for some time, you might have to resort to other methods. Basically, in theory, you need to create an option that excludes ankle biting and is even better in the puppy's mind to engage in.

Here are some ideas, if they don't work in your case, as every puppy has their own criteria about fun, at least these will be a starting point for your solution. Be ready when you most suspect puppy is likely to launch attack.

1. Does your puppy like to play ball? Get three tennis balls, the variety that squeaks is highly recommended. Have three balls stashed upon entry to the attack zone. Step in. Stop. Bounce ball, squeak wildly, big happy voice – Go get it! Throw ball #1. Take a few steps until pup returns, with or without ball. Repeat with ball #2, etc. Make your way across the room enthusiastically playing fetch.
2. Teach “sit/treat”. To be taught NOT at the moment of ankle attack, but some other quieter time, when puppy can focus and learn. Use his/her kibble as reward. Good trainers always have a small stash in their pockets for random rewards and puppy attention training anyway. Repeat as frequently as possible at random times. Sit! Good! Treat. So that this becomes second nature for pup. Sit! Good! Treat! Then introduce these commands in the target zone. If necessary, use better treats if you think this will help with response. Benny Bully's Liver Chops recommended as a high level reward. Break into small pieces. Enter room, sit/treat. Two steps. Sit/treat. Repeat. Now you make your way across the danger zone safely, and pup sits three or four times as you travel. Start with only TWO steps per movement. That way you can easily recapture pup's attention before he/she goes for ankles between sits.
3. Go to a pet supply store. Buy the biggest longest toy snake with squeakies you can find. Have it at the entrance of your attack zone. Pup is not allowed to play with this toy at any other time. Drag toy behind you, shaking it, squeaking, “get it! Get it!” . Pup chases toy, ignores ankles.

Just some ideas! Good luck!!

 **PAWS-ITIVE PUPPIES** 

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