

Why Children Bite

Understanding the Behavior & What to Do Instead

Most common for children 1–3 years old

♥ Biting is communication.

For many young children, biting isn't about being "mean" or "bad."

It's often their way of saying:

- I'm frustrated.
- I don't know how to share.
- I want that toy.
- I'm overwhelmed.
- I don't have the words yet.
- I need help.

Common Reasons Children Bite



Difficulty sharing or taking turns



Big feelings like frustration or anger



Limited language to express needs



Trouble waiting



Feeling overwhelmed or overstimulated



Teething or sensory needs

Respond in the Moment

- ✓ Stay calm.
- ✓ Comfort the child who was bitten.
- ✓ Use simple language.

"I won't let you bite. Biting hurts."

- ✓ Keep everyone safe.

Move close enough to prevent another bite if needed.

- ✓ Stay close during challenging play.

Coach your child before biting happens.

- ✓ Keep your response brief.

Avoid long explanations while emotions are high.

- ✓ Save teaching and practicing for later.

Children learn best when they are calm.



How to Help Prevent Biting 🧡

✓ Practice sharing and turn-taking during calm play.

Children learn these skills best before frustration begins.

✓ Stay close during challenging play.

Be ready to coach your child before emotions become overwhelming.

✓ Watch for early signs of frustration.

Step in when you notice grabbing, tense bodies, or raised voices.

✓ Teach simple words to use instead.

Practice phrases like "My turn, please," "Can I have a turn?" or "Help me."

✓ Create opportunities for success.

Use duplicate toys when possible or set a timer to help children take turns.



What Not to Do

When biting happens, it's easy to react with frustration.

Try to avoid:

- ✗ Shaming your child.
- ✗ Long lectures while they're upset.
- ✗ Asking, "Why did you do that?" in the moment.
- ✗ Forcing an apology.

Instead...

- ✓ Keep everyone safe.
- ✓ Use a calm, simple response.

"I won't let you bite. Biting hurts."

- ✓ Teach and practice the skill later, when your child is ready to learn.



Remember

Children don't automatically know how to:

- share
- wait
- solve conflicts
- manage frustration

These are skills children build through guidance, practice, and time.

Behavior is communication.

Most children don't bite because they want to hurt someone. They bite because they're still building the skills they need.

The goal isn't just to stop the biting, it's to teach the skill behind the behavior.

💛 Progress happens one interaction at a time.



Practice the Skill When Everyone Is Calm

The best time to teach sharing, turn-taking, and using words isn't during the conflict—it's during everyday play.

When children are calm, they can:

- Practice taking turns.
- Learn simple phrases like "My turn, please."
- Role-play what to do when they feel frustrated.
- Build confidence before challenging situations happen.

Think of it like learning to ride a bike. We practice before it's time to ride.

Social-emotional skills grow through calm, repeated practice—not in the middle of big emotions.

Keep Supporting Your Child's Social-Emotional Growth Biting is one behavior.

The real goal is helping children build the communication, emotional regulation, and problem-solving skills they'll use for life.

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