



Dealing with Biting

Central
Bedfordshire

Stopping a child from biting is not easy — it needs you to be very consistent in your handling of it

Biting is common behaviour among young children. Don't worry that your child is doing anything unusual or extreme. The child will learn not to bite in time, and you can help them by being very clear, very firm, and very calm when they do it; and very warm and full of praise when they don't.

Teething aside, children may bite for a number of reasons:

- **Curiosity** — children may bite to see what their friend's arm tastes like, or to see the reaction.
- **Frustration** - instead of hitting another child, a child may bite them. Or if things are not going their way, children may get very angry and frustrated and lash out by biting.
- **Copying** — children who see another child or adult biting may think that this is a good idea.
- **Seeking attention** — biting is a good way of getting others to take notice, even if the attention gained is negative.

When a Child Bites an Adult

Show your disapproval by putting them down immediately and moving away from them. If they have hurt you, say so. Very firmly and calmly, say something like: "No, we do not bite! It hurts; It's not nice". Then walk away.

Never bite back – it sends a very confused message

When a Child Bites a Peer

Remove the child immediately and comfort the other child. Or, better still, leave them where they are and calmly remove the victim so they do not receive extra attention for biting. As you do so, tell them firmly that they have hurt another child, that they are not to bite, then walk away. Perhaps even leave the room, provided it is safe to do so.

Keep an eye on the situations in which a child bites — is there a common thread to them? If you can identify the situation that the child will bite in, you can try the following:

- **Supervise** the child more closely during these times.
- **Try to intervene** before the child bites.
- **Show the child an alternative** strategy to biting, e.g., ask the other child for a turn with the toy.
- **Adjust the child's schedule** if you think they might be tired.
- **Don't panic and overreact.** This might frighten the child or prove their theory that if they behave badly enough you will take notice. Do react, but in a calm and clear manner.

Try to have as many relaxed and fun moments together as you can. This will help the child to see how good things can be when they are behaving well.