

Is your kitten biting you or playing too rough?

Posted by Jennifer on August 17th, 2010



Recently a friend asked me for some kitten advice. She adopted a new kitten, and was having real problems with her biting behavior. I've fostered hundreds of kittens and cats over the years, and have had many kittens (and cats) who played too rough and would play bite before. With the help of some knowledgeable cat behaviorists, I've been able to teach them all to stop. By "play bite" I mean bites that would hurt but happened during play, and luckily never broke the skin. Also, sadly, I've seen very sweet kitties brought to a shelter for play biting behavior, which, especially in a kitten, can frequently be fairly quickly remedied. I decided to share my friend's email and my response here, with my five steps for success. I hope this will help anyone who is struggling with a feisty, play-biting kitten!

Hi Jennifer! My family rescued the most adorable kitten. She's 3 month old, super friendly and cute, but this is THE MOST feisty kitten I have ever met! She bites bites bites all in non-stop play. She attacked my face even! I was told to only play with her with toys, but this doesn't seem to phase her. I have soft paws nail caps on her, but she can still bite. Any advice would be soooo welcome! Thanks!

It's so wonderful you rescued a kitten! That's great you already have nail caps on her. Here are **five steps** I've used with dozens of feisty foster kittens, to teach them not to bite or play rough with people:

1. **Adopt a kitty friend for your kitten!** Aim for around the same age (NOT younger, but the same age or a few months older) with an equal energy level. Before adopting, if you can, spend time with potential adoptees to try to pick one that plays gently with you already. The kittens will play together and the kittens will teach each other not to play or bite so hard that it hurts. They'll also have fun tiring each other out! -You can find kittens for adoption near you here: <http://adopt-a-cat.adoptapet.com>
Tip: If adopting a 2nd kitten isn't possible, though not as effective, give your kitten a stuffed animal toy kitten, the same size, and lots of other stuffed toys that she can bite and wrestle with safely.
2. Do not play with kitten using your hands, or toys that she plays with while they are in your hand. Don't allow anyone else to either!
3. Get a laser toy and feather toy on a string, or any other super fun running around toys that you can play without being too close to kitten. Like a remote

control mouse!! (Here's an [adorable video of a kitten playing](#) with a remote control mouse.) Get kitten's energy out with 3 "remote" play sessions of 5-10 minutes every day. Tire kitten out with fun!

Tip: The frequency and intensity of the play sessions will probably need to increase as she becomes an adolescent, until she matures into an adult kitty, and then can taper down. It's ideal to observe kitty during each session to see the moment she starts to get slightly less interested in playing, and stop before she's totally tired/bored with the game.

4. If kitten starts to rough-play with any part of your body, IMMEDIATELY stop playing & walk out of room. If she's "attacking" you while you are sleeping, or resting, you may need to close her out of those rooms while you are doing those activities, until these steps start helping.
5. Practice petting only when kitten is super sleepy, or eating. Kitten should learn human hands touching them is soothing, not play.

You should see improvement starting almost immediately, but definitely within a few days. If you do get bitten hard enough to draw blood, even the tiniest bit, make sure you immediately flush flush flush with clean running water at full force for at least 5 minutes, get some antibiotic ointment on it, and get to the doctor or ER room immediately for preventative antibiotics. Even tiny cat bites should not to be ignored. Not to scare you, but the infections they can cause, especially to hands and wrists, can be very severe and require surgery if not immediately (the same day) treated by a doctor.

Thanks again for adopting a kitten and giving her a loving and caring home!
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