



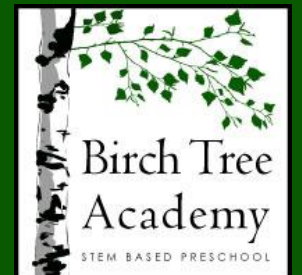
Toddlers and Biting

Development, Prevention
and Positive Responses

Birch Tree Academy

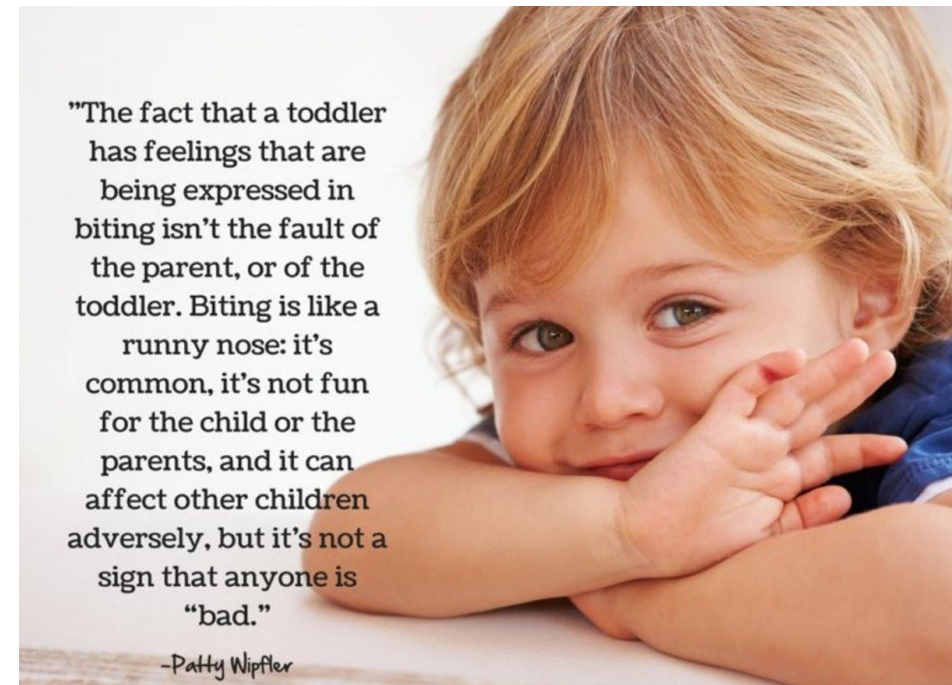
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www.BirchTreeAcademy.com



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- Why toddlers bite
- Preventative strategies
- Positive responses to biting
- When additional support may be needed
- Questions



Welcome

- **Acknowledge:** Biting can feel embarrassing or scary, but it's developmentally typical.
- **Normalize:** Most toddlers bite at least once; it is NOT a sign of bad parenting or a "bad child."



Why Toddlers Bite

Reason	Explanation
Communication Challenges	Limited words → Biting out of frustration
Impulse Control	Brain still developing → Immediate reaction
Sensory Exploration	Learning through touch and mouth
Teething Pain	Biting soothes sore gums
Emotional Overload	Biting to release strong feelings (anger, fear, excitement) Big life changes
Cause and Effect Curiosity	Experimenting: "What happens if I bite?"

Important: Biting is *rarely* intended to be aggressive or mean at toddler ages!

Prevention Strategies

- Environment and Emotional Management:
 - Watch for common triggers: transitions, crowding, tiredness, hunger.
 - Offer teething toys and sensory alternatives (chew necklaces, cold teethers).
 - Teach simple feeling words: "mad," "sad," "help."
- Positive Modeling:
 - Model calm ways to express big emotions.
 - Use "gentle hands" demonstrations frequently.
- Proactive Redirection:
 - Stay nearby during play.
 - Step in quickly if you see escalating behavior.
 - Praise positive behaviors ("You used your words! I can help you!")



Immediate Response to Biting

- Stay Calm and Neutral
 - Big reactions can reinforce the behavior.
- Firm, Clear Language
 - "Biting hurts. We use gentle touches."
- Attend to the Victim First
 - Comfort and care → reduces reward attention for the biter.
- Brief Removal if Needed
 - Gentle time-away ("You need a break when you hurt.")
- Teach Better Choices
 - Practice the correct behavior afterward. Teaching kids to ask for space. We teach the children to put their hand up and say "STOP."
- After a child has had more than one (after the second) instance of unprovoked physical aggression, additional steps are required
 - Per our parent handbook, a child will be sent home

Shadowing

- Shadowing is when the supervision of a child is increased significantly due to repeat biting or other unwanted behaviors.
 - The technique of shadowing includes holding hands and/or being within arm's reach of the child at all times in order to prevent the unwanted behavior from occurring
 - Teachers communicate who is on duty, take turns, and hold hands, sit down next to the child during circle time, etc.
- We cannot always do this due to ratio and classroom coverage needs as this is the priority.
- This can be effective but is a short- term solution to hopefully redirect the biting or challenging behavior.

What Not to Do

- When you pick up your child, please do not expect them to remember why they bit or what happened
 - Trust that the teachers are appropriately redirecting and taking care of the situation in the moment which is the age-appropriate response to the behavior.
- Please do not approach other parents to discuss the situation/issues. We understand it is difficult to be on both sides of these situations however it's important to let teachers and school admin address these concerns.
- Never bite your child to "show" them what it feels like. It doesn't work and only reinforces the biting behavior.

Long-Term Solutions:



- Consistency is key: respond the same way every time.
- Build emotional intelligence with books and games about feelings.
- Foster empathy: "See, she's crying because biting hurts."
- If this behavior becomes persistent, use a behavior log to track the incidents to gather data around patterns, strategize with teachers, and to communicate with families.

When to Seek Professional Support

- Biting frequently after 3 years old
- Biting that is consistent and unprovoked in an aggressive and purposeful manner
- Lack of language development alongside biting
- Child appears socially withdrawn or overly aggressive across environments



Remember:

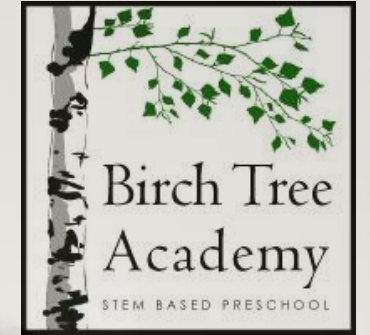
"This too shall pass."

Most toddlers stop biting once language improves, emotions mature, and caregivers consistently guide positive behavior.





Questions?



Thank You!

Birch Tree Academy is a STEM based bilingual preschool with heart. We're located in the greater Seattle area. Learn more at www.BirchTreeAcademy.com.

Questions? Contact us at education@birchtreeacademy.com.