THE SAME WORDS, AT HOME AND AT DAYCARE

When _____ bites

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WHAT WE SAY, EVERY TIME

I won't let you bite. Teeth are for food.

1
Calm first. A breath. Then a hand in between, or a step back.

2
Say the line once. Same words, same quiet voice. No lecture.

3
Go to the one who got hurt. They get the attention. Then, later, the instead: **a chewy.**

Everyone who looks after our child says it the same way every time.

✂ TEAR HERE FOR THE TEACHER

FOR THE TEACHER

The grown-ups at home use these words. It helps if you do too.

Every pediatric body says the same thing: one short line, said calmly, the same in every place the child is. Vanderbilt's early-childhood center puts it as "try to have all caregivers approach the biting in the same way." This is our line. We are not expecting a consequence at home for something that happened here, just the same words.

THE LINE WE USE AT HOME

I won't let you bite. Teeth are for food.

Then: the one who got hurt gets the attention first. **Later, when calm:** the instead is **a chewy**.

No time-out, no sorry on demand, never "biter". The same words, in both places.

WHAT CAME JUST BEFORE? WRITE BACK TO US

- ☐ Tired, before nap or late in the day
- ☐ Crowded, a busy corner or the door
- ☐ A toy, taken or wanted
- ☐ Something else: _____

Thank you. The grown-ups at home.

Watch your child's face when the kid saying teeth are for food is them.

A story with their name in it, their pressing feeling, the hand that gets there first, their chewy on its hook. **Scan to see the story.**

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FOR THE GROWN-UPS

The same words, on one page

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What every pediatric body says to do in the moment, and what the parents who got through it did. This is the shape of it.

In the moment

- [ ] **Calm yourself first.** A breath, a count to ten. Your calm is what they borrow.
- [ ] **Block or move.** Your hand gets there first if you can. Nothing lands.
- [ ] **Say the line once,** the same words, a quiet firm voice. No lecture.
- [ ] **Go to the one who got hurt.** They get the attention. Even a telling-off is attention.
- [ ] **Teach the instead later,** when everyone is calm. Practice it as a game.

With daycare

- [ ] **Hand over the tear-off half.** Ask them to use the same line.
- [ ] **Ask what came just before,** every time: tired, crowded, a toy.
- [ ] **Ask for a grown-up within arm's reach** at the busy moments.
- [ ] **No consequence at home** for something at ten in the morning.
- [ ] **If they say your child may have to leave:** ask for the plan in writing, and call your pediatrician.

Never

- [ ] **Never bite back.** The child psychiatrists say it in capitals.
- [ ] **Never "biter", "naughty" or "bad boy".** Say what the teeth did, not what the child is.
- [ ] **No sorry on demand.** Let them help instead: the cold cloth, the toy, the tower.
- [ ] **No shouting.** A big reaction is attention, and attention brings the biting back.

What to expect

It is normal. Lots of toddlers bite. It starts near one, climbs to about two and a half, then fades as the words come, usually by three or four.

It will happen again after the card goes up. That is not the plan failing. It takes many repetitions.

Call your pediatrician if it is getting worse over a few weeks, someone is getting hurt, it started after a big change, or your child is sent home from care. Ask about hearing and speech.

What's behind this: the American Academy of Pediatrics, Zero to Three, Vanderbilt University's early-childhood center, the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, the Canadian Paediatric Society, and parents' own stories. The full guide is at fablefleet.com/same-words-card.

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A STORY TO READ AT A CALM TIME

My biting feeling

1 My name is .

2 Sometimes I get a big feeling in my body.

3 Sometimes it is a mad feeling, a tired feeling, or a too crowded feeling.

4 Sometimes the big feeling goes to my mouth, and my mouth wants to bite.

5 Lots of little children get a biting feeling. That is OK.

6 Biting hurts. When someone gets bitten, they feel sad and sore.

7 My grown-ups help keep everybody safe, and they help me too.

8 When I get the biting feeling, I can say “Stop” or “Back up, please.”

9 I can bite my chewy, or crunch something crunchy at snack time.

10 My grown-up can help me with the big feeling.

11 My grown-ups love me, even when my feelings are big.

12 I am learning what to do with my biting feeling. Teeth are for food.

Finn

TEETH ARE FOR FOOD

Read it once a day at a calm time, never right after it happens. The two marked lines are the words you use in the moment. Say them the same way every time.

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