1. Why do children bite?

Children explore their environment with all their senses. Younger children in particular often use their mouths to do so. In many cases, biting is therefore a **developmental behavior** and not unusual.

Causes and triggers	
Development-related reasons	• Until around the age of two, children put many things in their mouths. • They learn through sensory experiences and the principle of cause and effect. • Out of a desire to explore, a child may, for example, put another child's arm in their mouth and bite it to see how it feels.
Teething	• Teething can be painful. • Pressure in the mouth, such as from biting, often alleviates the discomfort. • Biting behavior is therefore particularly common during this phase.
Biting behavior in group care	• Statistically, there is at least one biting incident every day in daycare centers. • This means that biting situations are normal, even if they are stressful for everyone involved.
Influence of the environment	In such situations, biting can be a means of creating space • Cramped play situations • Difficulties in getting attention and expressing oneself • Desire for distance or space
Physical needs as triggers	Unfulfilled needs can also be a reason biting, for example: • Tiredness • Hunger • Overstimulation • physical discomfort
Emotional causes	Strong emotions are often difficult for children to regulate, e.g.: • Frustration • Fear • Anger • Intense excitement **Changes** such as moving house, new daily routines, or the birth of a sibling can also lead to inner tension and encourage biting behavior. Biting then serves a purpose, especially in conflict situations like: • The reduction of tension • As a defense strategy • As an attempt to assert oneself In this case, biting is an **expression of emotions** for which no other coping strategies are yet available.
Language development	• Children with limited or delayed language skills communicate more frequently through physical means.

	• Based on the principle: “When words fail me, I use my body.”

2. Accompanying children: “Biting child” and “bitten child”: No perpetrators – no victims

<table>
<tr><th></th><th>Beim beißenden Kind:</th><th>Beim gebissenen Kind:</th></tr>
<tr><td>Good to know in advance</td><td colspan="2">In the public perception, biting is considered particularly problematic: it leaves visible marks and is emotionally very stressful.
Nevertheless, it is important to note that:
• Children who bite are not “offenders.”
• Children who have been bitten should not be stigmatized as “victims.”
• It is not about blame, but about accompanying a phase of development.</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">In the acute situation</td><td>• Speak clearly, calmly, and firmly, in an unemotional tone
• Keep your message short and clear, e.g., “Don't bite, it hurts.”
• Maintain eye contact and speak at eye level
 </td><td>• Affection and comfort
• Taking the pain seriously
• Medical care if necessary:
• Wash and cool the wound
• Disinfect skin injuries as well (only use products recommended by your pediatrician)</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">The most important thing is to stay calm.
It is important for both children that the response is immediate.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Effects on children</td><td>Children who bite frequently:
• quickly find themselves in a difficult group role
• They are shunned or excluded.</td><td>Children who have been bitten may:
• feel insecure
• develop fears
• show signs of sleep disorders</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Prevention in everyday life</td><td colspan="2">In the following hours and days, keeping a close eye on things can help prevent problems. The following measures are helpful:
• Sufficient space, plenty of time outdoors
• Clear rules
• Predictable routines
• Places to retreat to
• Talking about biting and hitting: naming body parts and discussing what hands and teeth, for example, should do and are good at doing
• Naming feelings and needs</td></tr>
<tr><td>Additionally supported:
• Offering alternatives, e.g.:
○ Teething rings
○ Squeeze balls
○ Pillows for letting off steam
• Targeted speech therapy and/or diagnostics if developmental delay is</td><td></td></tr>
</table>

	suspected	

3. Parents and guardians accompany

Biting incidents almost always trigger **strong emotions**—in all parents. Preventive measures should be coordinated as a team.

Many parents do not know how to react. It therefore makes sense to provide regular information about biting behavior as a **developmental phase**, e.g., at parents' evenings or development meetings.

	Parents of biting children	**Parents of children who have been bitten**
Common feelings include:	• Shame • Anger • Helplessness, insecurity, and feeling overwhelmed	• Fear for one's own child • Doubts about educational work • Confusion and anger

Cooperation with parents	As an educational professional, a clarifying conversation is crucial:
	• Consider possible causes together
	• Encourage parents to find solutions together, e.g.:
	• Strategien zum Gefühlsausdruck
	  ○ Strategies for expressing emotions
	  ○ Clear rest breaks
	  ○ Biting alternatives
	
	Tips for dealing with your child:
	• Stay calm and composed
	• Do not shame them
	• Convey a sense of security
	• Avoid feelings of guilt
		Many parents of children who have been bitten experience the daycare center afterwards:
		• no longer a safe place
		• with growing mistrust
		It becomes particularly difficult when there is no clear concept for dealing with biting incidents. This is especially true for families who have little knowledge of the daycare system or who still have little trust in professionals.
		
		Families need:
		• Transparency
		• The feeling of being taken seriously
		• A clear educational approach
		• Help with language barriers
		• Sensitive, recurring invitations on an equal footing to be more involved in everyday life at the daycare center
		A comprehensible concept helps to **maintain or restore trust.**

Tips	Use our letter to parents in combination with a sensitive, calm conversation.	

4. Finally

Biting is a temporary **developmental phase**. Children use it as a way of dealing with their feelings and needs. Clear and calm reactions, empathetic support, and close cooperation between parents and professionals are effective ways of managing biting behavior.
If biting occurs very frequently or over a longer period of time, additional support may be helpful, e.g., from counseling centers, doctors, or specialized professionals.
In almost all cases, a solution can be found together that strengthens the child and protects the entire group.

5. Helpful literature/materials

Carina Heer (2022). Beißen darf nur das Krokodil – Pappbilderbuch mit Illustrationen von Marilena Friese.

Dorothee Gutknecht (2024). Wenn Kinder beißen. Achtsame und responsive Handlungsmöglichkeiten. Fachbuch zum Thema für Fachkräfte, Leitung und Träger

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Gutknecht, D. (2018). *Wenn das „Haut-Ich" verletzt wird. Professioneller Umgang mit dem Beißverhalten von Kleinkindern in der Kita.* Zuletzt abgerufen am 08.12.2025, Verfügbar unter: https://www.kita-fachtexte.de/de/fachtexte-finden/wenn-das-haut-ich-verletzt-wird-professioneller-umgang-mit-dem-beissverhalten-von-kleinkindern-in-der-kita
Ostendorf-Servissoglu, E. (2022) *Mein Kind, der Kita-Schreck: Warum Kinder beißen und wie Sie damit umgehen können.* Zuletzt abgerufen am 08.12.2025, Verfügbar unter: https://www.element-i.de/magazin/mein-kind-der-kita-schreck-warum-kinder-beissen-und-wie-sie-damit-umgehen-koennen/
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SACHSEN-ANHALT Ministerium für Arbeit, Soziales, Gesundheit und Gleichstellung

#moderndenken

Dear parents / legal guardians,

today there was a biting incident in our childcare center. We would like to inform you openly and transparently.

Biting incidents are a regular part of daily life in daycare and preschool settings, especially with younger children. Even though these situations can be stressful for everyone involved, we would like to reassure you: **biting is a developmentally typical phase** and not intentional or "bad" behavior.

☐ Your child was bitten today
☐ Your child bit another child today
☐ At the moment, there are more frequent biting situations that your child may have observed.

Why do biting incidents occur?
Especially in the first years of life, children often express themselves through their bodies. Possible reasons include:

- curiosity and learning through all senses
- teething

or:

- strong emotions such as frustration, anger, or feeling overwhelmed
- tiredness, hunger, or sensory overload
- language skills that are not yet fully developed to express needs

Children do not bite to hurt others, but because they lack other ways to express themselves in that moment.

How we prevent biting
In our daily routine, we pay special attention to:

- providing enough space for movement and release of energy
- offering opportunities to withdraw and calm down
- maintaining clear and predictable routines
- naming and acknowledging feelings and needs
- offering age-appropriate alternatives (e.g. teething rings, stress balls)

Our request to you

Please talk to your child calmly and without judgment at home. Blame or punishment is not helpful. During this phase, children primarily need **safety, understanding, and supportive guidance.**

How we handled the situation
In the immediate situation, we:

- intervened calmly and clearly
- stopped and supported the child who bit
- comforted and cared for the child who was bitten

It is very important to us to **protect and support both children**. There is no labeling or stigmatizing of children as "offenders" or "victims".

Medical care
If your child was bitten, we:

- cleaned and cooled the affected area
- additionally disinfected the area if the skin was broken (using a suitable, child-appropriate disinfectant)

☞ **Important note regarding immunization status:**
In case of a skin injury, please check your child's tetanus vaccination status. If you have any concerns or notice anything unusual, we recommend contacting your pediatrician.

If you have any questions, concerns, or would like to talk further, please feel free to approach us at any time. Open communication is very important to us.

Thank you for your trust and cooperation.

Kind regards,
Your daycare team