

## Stop your dog from licking your



face

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Nature has placed severe limitations of the ability of dogs to communicate.

Body language is their only resource. They wag their tails, twist and jump excitedly, bark and growl, and lick faces and hands.

The first option expresses mood, the second expresses joy or general enthusiasm, the third is advisory, and the last expresses affection and respect.

The first three methods are generally acceptable to most owners. The last method, specifically licking the face, has less owner support. One owner succinctly summed up the situation saying, "I know where that tongue has been!"

Licking behavior is instinctive in puppies. Puppies lick their mother's face as a sign of recognition of the mother's care giving role. Face licking is also typical pack behavior to indicate subservience to the pack's dominant male and female. This behavior is naturally transferred to dominant humans and caregivers. Children, especially, bubble with joy when a friendly puppy licks them excitedly. They giggle and encourage the behavior. The puppy's licking behavior is rewarded by reciprocated affection, and the practice becomes ingrained.

Being licked by a new puppy does not seem as unsanitary as being licked by an older dog. After all, mature dogs are known to use their tongues to drink from the toilet, wash all body parts, eat their own feces, and then lick your face with that same tongue.

These are all excellent reasons to discourage a dog's face-licking behavior. A properly trained puppy can be taught to nuzzle a person's face without licking.

Punishment should have no part in training your dog not to face lick. Remember, it's a natural behavior for the dog. Face licking is not bad behavior; it's simply unacceptable to you. Teach, don't punish.

One recommendation is when your dog starts licking your face, turn your head away and command, "No licking." Move away from the dog and ignore him completely for a few minutes.

Others have reported success by gently restraining the dog's head, and pushing it back from the face with the command, "No licking," and then redirecting the dog's attention to a favorite toy.

Regardless of which method you use, if you are consistent, it will not take too long for the dog to realize that it is the face-licking behavior is not appreciated, and he will stop.

If you don't object to hand licking, that behavior can be rewarded by permitting it and showing the dog affection in return.

Eventually, the dog will satisfy his need by licking your hands and not your face. If you decide to allow hand licking, be prepared to wash your hands a lot.

Be sure to inform other family members about the dog's training, and of how important you feel it is to stop the face-licking behavior. Small children will probably not understand, but should be taught not to

encourage the behavior.

The training will be generally ineffective if the dog learns that face licking is acceptable to everyone in the home except you. Be consistent.

*Nancy Cope is the owner of four rescue dogs and [Pampered Dog Gifts](#).*