WHEN A CHILD BITES

A Calm, Developmentally Appropriate Response

Biting is a behavior, not a label. Young children are still learning to communicate, manage emotions, and interact with others.

RESPOND

1. Keep everyone safe.
Separate the children and comfort the child who was bitten.

2. Stay calm.
Avoid yelling, shame, or labeling the child.

3. Use simple words.

To the child who was bitten:
"That hurt. I'm going to help you."

To the child who bit:
"I won't let you bite. Biting hurts."

4. Follow your program's procedures.
Document and communicate with families according to your program's policies.

DON'T

✗ Bite the child back
✗ Shame or embarrass
✗ Call a child a "biter"
✗ Force an apology
✗ Assume the child intended to hurt someone

KEEP IN MIND

A calm response teaches more than a big reaction.

Children need our help learning what to do instead.

Little Years Big Impact
Small moments. Meaningful connections. Big impact.
littleyearsbigimpact.com

LOOK FOR THE WHY

Instead of only asking:
“How do I stop the biting?”

Ask:
“What is this child trying to communicate?”
Biting may be connected to:
☐ Frustration or communication
☐ Conflict or difficulty sharing
☐ Fatigue, hunger, or teething
☐ Overstimulation
☐ Sensory needs
☐ Excitement or seeking connection
These are possibilities, not assumptions. Look for patterns.

WHAT CAN I TRY NEXT?

Teach the words:
“My turn.” • “Help.” • “Stop.” • “I want that.”

Change the environment:
More space • less waiting • duplicate toys • sensory/movement opportunities
Stay connected:
Offer positive attention and help the child practice a new way to communicate.

A LITTLE REMINDER

The child isn’t bad.
The behavior is telling us something.

Understand. Teach. Support. Keep children safe.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Follow your program’s policies for injuries, documentation, family communication, and confidentiality. This resource provides general professional support and does not replace program policies or professional guidance.