

Lucky Beans  
*Childcare*

PARENTS GUIDE TO

# BITING IN THE NURSERY

How should you react?



# Why do Children Bite?

Investigating the psychological reasons your child may bite.

---



## Relief from teething pain

If children are teething they may have sore gums and teeth trying to break through so biting down onto something can help to relieve the pain they are feeling.

## Explore Cause and Effect

Young babies and children are naturally curious and may want to find out what happens when they bite someone or something.

## Satisfy a Need for Stimulation

Some children, particularly those with Sensory Processing Disorder have a need to bite down on objects as a way to help self-regulate, relieve anxiety and cope with stressful situations.



## Irritate Children or Adults

Children may witness their siblings or friends biting and copy the behaviour or it may be they have seen a parent/adult biting their child back in response to the child biting others.

## For Attention

Children may bite to gain adult attention, for some children a negative adult response is better than no response at all.



# Why do Children Bite?

Investigating the psychological reasons your child may bite.

---

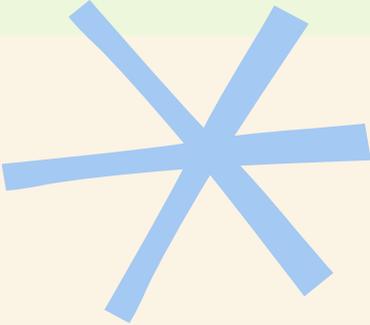
## Protect themselves in Self Defence

Children may feel they are being threatened or attacked by another child and so may bite in response to these feelings.

## Communicate or Express Feelings

Children who cannot talk or who cannot articulate what they are feeling may use biting as a form of communication. It is a way of trying to communicate what they are feeling at that time.





## The ABC Chart



It's important that early years practitioners observe children to identify reasons for biting.

A common tool to observe incidents of biting is an ABC chart. This can help you to observe incidents of biting over a period of time and identify factors affecting behaviour and any patterns or triggers in the incidents.



# ABC Chart

*Continued...*

**A = Antecedent.** In this section you need to record what was happening immediately prior to the biting incident. You may wish to record where the child was in the setting, what adults were around, other children present etc.

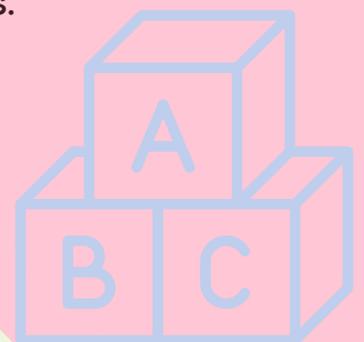
**B = Behaviour.** In this section you need to record exactly what the child did, what they said and any emotional response etc.

**C = Consequences.** In this section you should record what happened immediately after the incident, how the child reacted, how adults responded, and final outcomes.

Once you have recorded your incidents you need to review the information to identify any patterns, for example:

- Is it always happening at the lunch table or in the outdoor area?
- Is it always at a certain time of day or when the child is tired?
- Look at who is involved e.g. is it a particular interaction with the same child or is the same member of staff present that the child is trying to get attention from?

Once you have a greater insight into what is happening you can think about measures to prevent or avoid any future biting incidents.



# ABC Chart

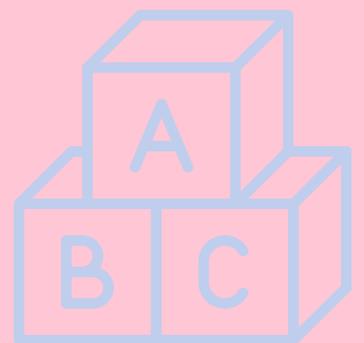
Continued...

## ABC Chart

Child Observed:

Age:

<b>Date &amp; Time</b>	<b>Antecedent</b> (what was happening prior to the incident)	<b>Behaviour</b> (what actually happened)	<b>Consequence</b> (what happened immediately after the incident and final outcomes)	<b>Signature</b> (person completing the incident record)



# MINIMISING BITING

1

Say in a firm, clear voice,  
'stop/no, biting hurts'.

2

Give comfort and attention to the child that has been bitten. Acknowledge how they might be feeling e.g. 'that has made you very sad, that must hurt etc.'

3

Administer medical attention if needed or seek another member of staff to give first aid whilst you talk to the biter.

4

In a clear, unemotional voice talk to the child that has bitten another, 'biting hurts and we shouldn't hurt our friends'. Point out the impact the bite has had on the other child, e.g. 'look how sad it has made Billy'. Ask the child, 'what do you think you can do to make Billy feel better?' Ideas may include: bringing Billy his favourite book/toy/key person.

# MINIMISING BITING CONTINUED

5

Talk to the biter, 'I can see you were upset about something, can you tell me what happened?'. Acknowledge their feelings, 'so you were upset because Billy took your train? Yes I can see that would make you feel upset because you were playing with it and Billy took it off you. Now you are both feeling upset, you're upset because he took your toy and Billy is upset because you bit him and biting hurts. What do you think you can do next time Billy takes your train, instead of biting him?' Discuss a range of ideas together e.g. ask Billy to give it back, come and tell an adult who can help, find another train etc. Reiterate ideas by saying, 'so next time anybody takes your toy you are going to .... ..' and let the child give their ideas.

6

Write up an incident report.  
(ABC)

7

Talk to the parents, reassuring them that although very distressing biting is a form of communication and can be part of a child's development process. Reassure them that you have a consistent approach to biting and a range of strategies in place to minimise biting incidents. Share how you teach children about cause and effect of biting and support them to develop empathy.

8

If the biting continues, refer to previous ABC Charts to identify any key factors that may be contributing to the biting incidents.



# Developing Empathy

It is important to have empathy towards a child who bites.

When biting occurs, asking a child to say sorry to another child is only suggested if they understand why and is able to show remorse. Otherwise, you are only forcing a child to say a specific word to get themselves out of trouble. This will have no real impact on developing the child's empathy skills, which may mean the behaviour continues.

Consider how many times you have walked over to deal with inappropriate behaviour and the 'perpetrator' is already shouting the word 'sorry' because they have learnt that this is the expected response and they haven't really developed an understanding of cause and effect of their actions or how to empathise with the child they have hurt.

Based on our previous learning how many alternatives can you think of to a child being asked/or adults insisting on them saying 'sorry'? Take a look at some suggestions on the next page:





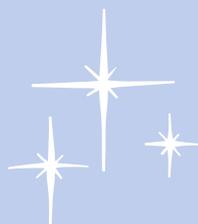
## WAYS TO SHOW EMPATHY

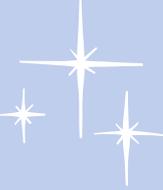
1 Asking the child how they can make the person feel better. 

2 Bringing a favourite toy/book to the child they have hurt. 

3 If appropriate and acceptable, offering a hug/cuddle/stroke to the child they have hurt. 

4 Fetching the child's favourite blanket or comforter. 





## WAYS TO SHOW EMPATHY

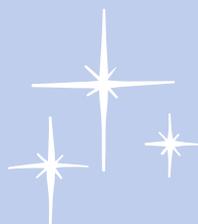
5 Asking the child's key person to come over to offer some comfort.



6 Inviting the child to join in their play.



7 Bringing a drink or drinking cup over to the child for comfort.



## HOW DO YOU BROACH THE SUBJECT WITH PARENTS?

It's natural for parents of both the biter and the child who has been bitten to get very upset, so you need to acknowledge their feelings.

How should you address the family of the child who has been bitten?

1. Contact the parents before they arrive to pick up their child if they have been injured, so they can be prepared rather than express their shock and upset in front of the children
2. Explain to the parents how the nursery deals with these incidents and why
3. Reassure the parents that you have effective strategies in place to reduce the number of incidents.

How should you address the family of the child who has bitten another child?

1. Explain that biting is a form of communication and although distressing, is a stage of development that many children pass through.
2. Find out if there have been incidents of biting outside of nursery and if there have been any changes that may be affecting their child.
3. Share the strategies you have in place to prevent and minimise biting and agree a joint approach.
4. If they have bitten previously, take more time to share your methods of dealing with the child in the immediate aftermath.
5. Talk to them about how to support their child to develop empathy with others.
6. Make sure you include what they should never do, such as physically scold the child or even bite them back to see what it feels like. This can only add to the child and family's distress

