



CHEWING

Destructive behaviors (chewing, barking, digging, etc.) are not only damaging to your home and possessions, but they can also lead to injury to your dog. With a little time and work, you and your dog should be able to have a good life together.

CHEWING

Most destructive chewing by puppies is normal behavior, some puppies may exhibit destructive behavior for the same reasons as adult dogs. Examples include separation anxiety, fear-related behaviors, and attention-getting behavior.

THE NORMAL CHEWING REGIMEN

Puppies explore their world by putting things in their mouths. In addition, puppies are teething until they are about 6 months old, which usually causes them some discomfort. Chewing not only facilitates teething, but also makes sore gums feel better. While it is perfectly normal for puppies to chew on furniture, shoes, and shrubbery, these behaviors can be a problem for you and your puppy will not magically “outgrow” this behavior as he matures.

Shaping your puppy's behavior and teaching him which objects are acceptable to chew and which are not enables you to MINIMIZE this NATURAL - INSTINCTUAL - PHYSIOLOGICALLY NECESSARY behavior problem to be squashed at about 6 months of age.

ENCOURAGE ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOR

- Provide your puppy with many different types of appropriate toys.
- Rotate your puppy's toys. Puppies are often more interested in unfamiliar or novel objects. Put out four or five toys for a few days, then pick those up and put out four or five different ones.
- Experiment with different kinds of toys. When you introduce a new toy to your puppy, watch him to make sure he will not tear it up and ingest the pieces.
- Consider the various types of toys that can be stuffed with food. Putting tidbits of food inside chew toys focuses your puppy's chewing activities on those toys instead of on unacceptable objects.
- If your puppy is teething, try freezing a wet washcloth, my favorite treat is frozen carrots.





DISCOURAGING UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOR

It is virtually inevitable that your puppy will, at some point, chew up something you value. This is part of raising a puppy! You can, however, prevent most problems by taking the following precautions:

- Minimize chewing problems by puppy-proofing your house. Put the trash out of reach inside a cabinet or outside on a porch or buy containers with locking lids. Encourage children to pick up their toys and do not leave socks, shoes, eyeglasses, briefcases, cell phones, or TV remote controls lying around within your puppy's reach.
- If, and only if, you actually catch your puppy chewing on something he should not, interrupt the behavior with a loud noise, then offer him an acceptable chew toy instead. Play with him lavishly when he takes the toy in his mouth.
- Make unacceptable chew items unpleasant to your puppy. Furniture and other items can be sprayed with Bitter Apple or other taste aversive to make them unappealing.
- Do not give your puppy objects to play with that can cause confusion, such as old socks, old shoes, or old children's toys that closely resemble items that are off limits. He cannot tell the difference!
- Closely supervise your puppy. Do not give him the chance to go off by himself and get into trouble. Use baby gates, close doors, or tether him to you with a six-foot leash so you can keep an eye on him.
- When you must be gone from the house, confine your puppy to a small, safe area, such as a laundry room. You may also begin to crate train your puppy. ***(Puppies under 5 months of age should not be crated for longer than four hours at a time, as they may not be able to control their bladder and bowels longer than that.)***
- Make sure your puppy is getting adequate physical activity. Puppies left alone in a yard do not play by themselves. Take your puppy for walks and /or play a game of fetch with him as often as possible.
- Your puppy learns what is appropriate in the house when he is in the house with you, so give your puppy plenty of people time.

THE SCOLD

Puppies associate punishment with what they are doing at the moment they are being punished. If you see the destruction even minutes after it has occurred, it is too late to correct or punish the puppy because it cannot associate the item with the behavior.

Dog and puppies do not reason, "I tore up those shoes an hour ago and that's why I'm being scolded now." Some people believe this is what a puppy is thinking because he runs and hides or because he "looks guilty." Guilty looks are canine appeasing postures that dogs show when they feel threatened. When you are angry and upset, the puppy feels threatened by your tone of voice, body postures, and/or facial expressions, so he may hide or show appeasing postures. Punishment after-the-fact will not only fail to eliminate the undesirable behavior, but could provoke other undesirable behaviors, such as not coming when called, not trusting a hand coming to the collar as well as fear and sometimes aggression.





Destructive Chewing by Puppies and Dogs

Leaving things on the floor where the dog or puppy can reach it gives the dog easy access to things to chew!

Destructive chewing is a common problem in puppies and adult dogs.

Chewing by puppies is a natural, normal behavior. Puppies chew because they are teething, they are playing, they are learning about their environment, they are trying to escape from their kennel, etc.

One of the main way's puppies learn about their world is to put things in their mouths and chew on them. It is unlikely that you will be able to stop normal chewing behavior completely in puppies. Trying to stop a normal but unwanted behavior can cause stress and anxiety, and lead to more serious behavior problems.

Teething occurs in puppies up to eight months of age. That means chewing problems can be worse in younger animals than in older ones.

Adult dogs may be destructive chewers because they have separation anxiety, they are playing, they are hungry, they do not get enough exercise, they were not properly trained as puppies, etc.

How can you minimize the damage to your home and household?

The basic methods are to keep your puppy/dog busy, prevent access to things that you do not want damaged, and provide your pet with acceptable things to chew.

1. Keep your dog busy. Exercise, fun, reward-based training sessions, playtime, feeding from food dispensing toys rather than bowls, etc., allow your dog to use her brain and muscles.
2. Dog proof your house. In other words, keeping things (clothes, children's toys, small objects, etc.) that can be destroyed off the floor and out of the dog's reach. Keep closets, drawers, and toy boxes closed. Take objects off any surface the dog can reach.
3. Supervise your dog. If there are times you cannot watch the dog while she is running loose in the house, put her in a secure area (dog kennel, crate, enclosed room, etc.) or leash her to your belt. If you decide to use a kennel or crate, you will have to acclimatize her to it, or she may develop other behavior problems.
4. If there are items that you cannot prevent your dog from having access to, you may decide to try deterrents, such as making the area around the object unpleasant (plastic rug runners or motion/vibration detectors).
5. If you catch your dog chewing an inappropriate object, do not scare her or try to punish her. Use the treat-in-trade method by offering her a treat or something else worth trading for; when the pup is clearly invested in the new item, pick up the discarded one. With swapping, the pup will not fear an owner's approach when she has something she values because the owner's approach is generally associated with getting something better! Start using this technique early in her training and encourage swapping for lots of items so that she can learn the technique and will learn to readily give up even a highly prized object. It is always better to reinforce positive behavior than to punish your pet because punishment can cause anxiety and other undesirable





behaviors to develop. Dr Sophia Yin's book *Perfect Puppy in 7 days* has more training tips.

6. Provide plenty of acceptable chew toys. What is acceptable depends on the size of your dog, what she finds appealing, etc. Many items have been commonly used (large bones, rawhide chews, plastic bones, hooves, Kong toys, rubber toys, puzzle/foraging toys, dental treats, and so on). However, some are no longer as acceptable as they once were. Cattle hooves, sterilized large bones, plastic bones, etc. can damage teeth. Rawhide chews may become choking hazards if the dog is not supervised and the rawhide taken away when it becomes small enough to be swallowed. Ask your veterinarian or veterinary dentist for professional preferences on what are safe, acceptable chew toys. Always raise/reward your dog for chewing appropriate things. Remember that toys will be destroyed; that is how you know it is a toy your dog likes.
7. Do not give your dog old shoes, clothes, or children's toys for her to chew on. Dogs really cannot tell the difference between those items and your "good" shoes, clothes, etc.
8. If an animal is protecting resources and showing aggression, the animal should be avoided when it has those items and should have a veterinary behavior consultation because there may be a more complex problem going on.
9. If these things do not help, or if the destructiveness gets worse, consult your veterinarian for help.

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