

DESTRUCTIVE CHEWING & DOGS

It is normal for dogs to chew, especially puppies who are teething. However, until you teach them what items are appropriate to chew on, you need to know how to manage your dog's attempts to chew on your personal items.

Managing the Situation

Take responsibility for your own items and keep them out of your dog's reach. Don't confuse your dog by offering them things such as shoes or socks and then expect them to know the difference between shoes they can and can't chew. Dog toys should be obviously different from household items. Until they learn, confine your dog when you can't keep an eye on them. Have your dog go to obedience training to learn commands, such as "leave it". Classes may also help by burning off some of your dog's excess energy. If you actually catch your dog in the act of chewing on something they shouldn't be, interrupt the behavior with a loud noise and offer an acceptable chew toy. Be realistic with your expectations, as well. Chances are, your dog will, at some point, chew on something you care about. This is often a part of a dog's transition into a new home. Dogs will engage in destructive behavior for many reasons. To deal with this behavior, you must determine the reason why your dog is being destructive.



Play, Boredom, and/or Social Isolation

Normal playing for dogs can result in destruction since it may involve, digging, chewing, shredding, and/or shaking toy-like objects.

Your dog may be chewing for entertainment if:

- They are left alone for long periods of time without interaction.
- Their environment is barren without playmates or toys.
- You have a puppy or young dog under 3 years of age and they don't have other outlets for their energy.
- You have a very active type of dog who needs an active lifestyle to be happy.

Solutions

- Play with your dog daily.
- Go on walks. These walks should be longer than just allowing your dog to go to the bathroom.
- Increase your dog's opportunities to be mentally stimulated. Teach them new commands and tricks. Provide many toys. Rotate out the toys so your dog doesn't lose interest. Try different types of toys, but make sure to watch your dog so they won't tear it up and eat the pieces. You can also try toys that can be stuffed with food so that your dog focusses on these toys instead of unacceptable objects.
- Make your dog's favorite unacceptable objects unattractive by covering them with heavy plastic, aluminum foil, hot pepper sauce, or a commercial "anti-chew" product.
- Consider a doggie daycare program for a few days a week to work out some of your dog's excess energy.

Separation Anxiety & Fears/Phobias

Sometimes dogs will chew as a result of separation anxiety. If a dog is suddenly left alone more, for example, they may deal with their stress by chewing. Some dogs may have phobias of loud noises so they will chew during a thunderstorm or when they hear construction sounds. If the primary damage is to doors, doorframes, window coverings, screens, or walls, then your dog may be chewing out of fear. To solve this problem, you can work on your dog's fear and reduce their stress.

Attention-Seeking Behavior

We often pay more attention to our dogs when they are misbehaving. From a dog's perspective, negative attention is better than no attention at all. So, to get your attention, sometimes dogs will chew on unacceptable objects.

Solutions

- Make sure your dog receives plenty of positive attention every day. This includes playing, walking, grooming, or just petting.
- Ignore bad behavior (as much as possible) and reward only good behavior. Remember to praise your dog when they play with appropriate toys.
- Make your dog's favorite off-limits chew objects unavailable or unattractive.
- Teach your dog a "drop it" command so when they pick up an off-limits object, you can instead praise them for dropping it after you say the command. The best way to teach this type of command is to offer food and exchange it for their toy.
- Practice "Nothing in Life is Free" with your dog. This gets your dog in the habit of listening to your commands and this also ensures your dog gets lots of positive attention for doing the right things.
- Increase your dog's opportunities to be mentally stimulated. Teach them new commands and tricks.



What Not to Do

Never punish your dog after they have already finished chewing on something they shouldn't have. Your dog will not understand why they are being punished, and instead, will become fearful of you.