



Destructive Chewing

Destructiveness is one of the most common behavioural problems for dogs. Often this destructiveness takes the form of chewing the owner's possessions instead of the dog's toys.

We must first understand that chewing is a necessary activity for all dogs -- not just puppies. Chewing keeps a dog's jaw muscles in good shape and also helps to keep their teeth clean. Dogs need to chew. Our job is getting them to chew the right things. Please remember, dogs have no concept of the monetary difference in value between a rawhide bone and a Chippendale chair.

As an owner, you must keep your dog supplied with an array of suitable chew toys. You may have to experiment to find out what type of toys your dog prefers -- remember all dogs are different.

Kongs are a wonderful chew toy, because you can stuff them in a variety of ways to keep your dog occupied. Sterilized, hollow bones can also be stuffed and make great chew toys. See the handout on Mental and Physical Stimulation for tips on toy stuffing. Another advantage of the stuffing toys is that they provide a puzzle for your dog to work out.



Dogs need to solve problems. Dogs are predators who originally hunted as a group -- they are designed to solve problems, and a lack of problems to solve is part of what makes domestic dogs destructive.

Get your dog hooked on his chew toys!

Make the toys attractive to him and praise him (treat him if appropriate) whenever he is chewing on a correct item. Play hide-and-seek with his chew toys, making them even more interesting and valuable. Train him to bring you his toy when you come home from an absence, and then play fetch or keep-away with it.

Supervise your dog closely when you are home. Make sure he's chewing on the right toy, praising him periodically for doing so. If he looks like he's about to begin chewing on an inappropriate item, redirect him to one of his chew toys.



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When you are not at home, confine your untrained dog in a dog-proof area with a supply of his chew toys. See the handout on Crate Training and Confinement.

You can rotate the toys from day to day so he doesn't become bored, but provide the most interesting (stuffed Kongs, etc.) for the longest absences.

There is no point in punishing your dog after the fact. If he has chewed something he wasn't supposed to, take that rolled up newspaper and hit yourself over the head, because you didn't manage your dog's environment properly!

If your dog has a more serious problem, such as separation anxiety, please call for help.



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