

How to Handle Chewing by Your New Dog

Chewing is a natural behavior in dogs. They chew when they are bored or anxious but they also just enjoy the activity. If a dog is not provided with appropriate chew toys and encouraged to use them, this natural behavior often results in damage to household and personal items. Puppies who are teething can be especially destructive. Providing your puppy with plenty of chew toys and properly supervising him will help save your furniture, shoes, and other precious possessions.



By Kelley Bollen

To encourage your dog to chew on appropriate items, purchase a dozen or so chew toys (Nylabones, Kong toys, antlers, etc.) and rotate them so that your dog doesn't get bored with any one item. Have two to three items out at a time and change them up with something else every other day to keep your dog interested in her chew item choices. Encourage toy usage by incorporating toys into play sessions. You can also increase appeal by smearing smoochy food in or on the item or soaking it in chicken broth overnight. Always praise your dog for chewing on her own toys. If you catch your dog chewing on an inappropriate item, ask her to "give" in exchange for a food treat, and then replace the item with one of her toys. If your dog is chewing on the furniture or woodwork you can spray the area with a bitter tasting product like Bitter Apple or Foey. This will discourage the dog from chewing these areas – but it's important that you renew the spray every day until the dog learns the item always tastes bad.

Another important tip is to never give your dog chew toys that look like items he is not allowed to chew. Giving your dog an old pair of sneakers or socks for example, only muddies the water. His chew toys should clearly be chew toys!

Often times, dogs learn that getting a hold of a forbidden object brings attention from their owner. In order to get rid of this attention seeking behavior, you must learn not to respond to it. **DO NOT** get into a game of chase with your dog even if it means sacrificing the item. This is exactly what he wants, and oh how fun it is! Be sure to give your dog plenty of attention when he is being good. It's also advisable to teach your dog a "drop it" or "give" command so that you can retrieve items he has gotten a hold of without engaging in a chase.

Never punish "after the fact." If you do not catch your dog in the act of chewing, you **CANNOT** punish him. Your dog will not connect the two events and he will just learn to be afraid of you. Keep valuable items out of your dog's reach and provide him with a variety of wonderful items that he is allowed to chew, and you will be able to live in harmony with your canine friend and his big teeth.

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