



## Puppy 101: Destructive Behavior

Although exceedingly “cute”, your new puppy depends on your direction and leadership for healthy habits. As a puppy, destructive habits can quickly escalate in severity and become significant challenges when that puppy becomes a dog if not addressed quickly and consistently.

### Related Topics:

- CRATE & TOILET TRAINING
- SOCIALIZATION
- NUTRITION & EXERCISE

### Chewing



Chewing is a normal form of exploration and play for dogs, and especially growing puppies. However, destructive chewing can be a clinical sign of a behavioral challenge. Any severe or persistent chewing should be brought to the attention of your veterinarian. Puppies are not born knowing what an appropriate chew toy is, and they must be taught. The following tips will help you control destructive chewing in your puppy’;

- **Puppy Proof Your House!** Remove or temporarily store the items in your house that a puppy is likely to get. If you are unable to remove the chewing target from the home, you may try applying a commercially available chewing repellent.
- Provide your puppy with appropriate and abundant sources of exercise.
- Provide acceptable objects for chewing, especially during their teething period (3-6 months)
- Supervise your puppy closely and try to anticipate inappropriate chewing and then redirect.
- When supervision is not possible, keep them restricted in safe and secure area - safe crate training.
- If you catch your puppy in the act of chewing on an unacceptable object, substitute an acceptable object and provide praise for chewing the desired object.
- Remember not to physically punish your puppy for chewing! Physical negative reinforcement can injure your puppy or lead to more serious fear and/or defense aggression.

### Digging

Digging can either be a normal behavior or a clinical sign of a behavioral disorder. Information about where and when a dog digs can provide insight into what is motivating your puppy. Some reasons for digging and common interventions include;

Reasons:	Interventions:
Exploration / Play / Boredom	Provide alternative methods of exercise & environmental stimulation; ie walks, swimming, social play. Consider a designated digging area by burying toys in specific location.
Hunting	Remove prey or target from environment or restrict access.
Escape	May be normal behavior or related to anxiety. Consult your veterinarian for distinguishing the reason.
Regulating Body Temperature	Provide alternative cool place for your dog to rest.
Anxiety	Consult with your veterinarian on the appropriate course of treatment.

### Play Biting

Play biting is a natural part of puppy development, but should not be allowed to become aggressive or unwarranted. Play mouthing / biting on people should not be encouraged; use toys rather than hands or feet. Bites that cause pain or injury are never acceptable behavior.

If a puppy starts to mouth a person, substitute with a toy and provide positive reinforcement for chewing on the toy. When a puppy chews on a person, cease all interaction immediately, turn away and in some cases leave the room entirely. Do not allow the behavior to continue.

Another important rule to remember is the need to exercise your puppy. Exercise keeps your growing puppy balanced physically and emotionally. Puppies often play bite resulting from too much stored energy. Managing appropriate energy levels through exercise is great way to mitigate unwanted behavior.

Remember not to physically punish your puppy for play biting! Physical negative reinforcement can injure your puppy or lead to more serious fear and/or defense aggression.