Ending Destructive Chewing
Scottee Meade
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Dogs love to chew.  Puppies chew to investigate their environment and to relieve the discomfort of teething.  Adult dogs chew because it feels good, it helps pass the time when there’s nothing else to do, and sometimes because a tooth hurts or some nutrient is missing from the diet.  Left to their own devices, dogs will often chew on the first object they come across, or an object that smells like the owner.  Sometimes a food smell attracts them.  Whatever the reason, chewing problems are easier to prevent than correct, and are best corrected using positive methods.

Punishment
Punishing a dog for inappropriate chewing is seldom successful in correcting the problem.  To be effective as a training tool, punishment must be 100% consistent.  If a dog is punished for chewing in the owner’s presence, he simply learns to chew when the owner is absent.  Punishment more than 3 seconds after the crime is not effective; the dog has already forgotten the crime.  If you come home to a scene of destruction, very calmly tell your dog to go get a chew toy and praise him for bringing one to you.  If you are really angry and must let off steam, go in another room, away from the dog, and beat up a pillow.  Beating a dog simply teaches him to fear the person beating him, and possibly people in general.

Prevention
The best way to protect your furnishings and possessions is to start when your puppy is very young, confining it when you cannot supervise play, providing sufficient exercise and proper nutrition, offering appropriate chew toys, and praising the pup lavishly for using them. Crating your pup can be a life-saver, preventing it from chewing electrical cords or ingesting poisons when left unsupervised.  Make sure the crate is large enough to allow the pup to stretch out.  Provide a comfy bed, and a couple of really good chew toys.

When you are with the pup but unable to supervise closely, confine it with a leash attached to your belt. Make sure the pup won’t chew the leash, and provide one or two good chew toys.  Try to catch the pup in the act of chewing the right thing and praise lavishly.

Exercise Body and Mind

Many chewing problems are solved simply by ensuring the dog has sufficient exercise.  A 30-minute walk in the morning before the dog is left for the day will help relax and even tire the dog enough to reduce the desire to chew.  Incorporating some training exercises into the walk, such as having the dog sit or down at several points on the walk, and doing a come-fore exercise 3 or 4 times will also help relax the dog.  If a walk is impossible, 15 or 20 minutes of tossing a ball in the backyard or down a flight of carpeted stairs for the dog to retrieve will do the trick.  The dog should also have some exercise in the evening, to help it relax for bedtime.

Training
Take the time to teach your dog to chew on chew toys.  Always reinforce your dog with lots of praise when you “catch him in the act” of chewing on his own toys.  Play games such as toss and fetch with a toy to increase his interest.  If the problem chewing occurs when you leave the house and is focused on belongings that smell like you, try to leave your scent on his own toys.  Carry a new chew toy around in your pocket for a day and handle it, or just rub your hands over one of his toys.  Once he has the hang of chewing on his toys, teach him to “Go get a chew toy,”  praising him when he brings one to you.

Keep chew toys in every room of the house until the dog gets good at finding them on command or on his own.  Eventually, you can keep them in a centrally located toy basket, making sure that the dog has unlimited access to them.  Periodically you will have to fish them out from under chairs and sofas and return them to the basket.

Once this training is under way, you can lead the dog to a forbidden object, such as drapes or shoes or electrical cords.  Move the object around, and just as he is about to sniff or lick or chew the object, say “OFF!” in a firm voice, and then, “Go get your chew toy.”  Repeat this several times, and then if you catch him investigating a forbidden object on his own, repeat the “OFF” and “Go get your chew toy.” command.  This is what trainers call an instructive reprimand, letting him know by tone of voice and words what is wrong and how he can correct the problem.

**Appropriate Chew Toys**

Provide your dog with a variety of chew toys, including a Kong toy, nylon bones, marrow bones, soup bones, raw bones, and a soft “Chew Man” type or twisted rope toy, toys you can stuff with food for hours of puppy occupation.  Different dogs prefer different textures, and one dog may prefer several different toys depending on its mood.  Avoid home-made toys like worn-out tennis shoes or knotted socks.  It takes extra time to teach the dog the difference between the old shoes and your brand-new $100 running shoes, and certain fibers, like the nylon in socks or hose can be very dangerous to a dog when ingested.  It is cheaper to spend money on good dog toys than to replace your good clothes.  Hollow toys, such as the Kong or marrow bones can be stuffed with peanut butter or cheese to increase desirability.  After some trial and error, you will discover what your dog likes best.  It’s a good idea to stock up on favorite toys, so that new ones are always available.

**Nutrition and Health**

If your older dog suddenly develops a chewing problem, have your vet do a thorough exam to rule out illness, such as an abscessed tooth.  With all dogs, be sure that the diet is adequate to meet that dog’s nutritional needs.  A dog with a fixation on chewing a particular substance (such as wood or paper) may have a pica, a craving for something missing from the diet.  Look for a food with as little filler as possible, and avoid foods with additives and byproducts.

Many dogs develop destructive chewing habits when their feeding schedule changes, specifically when meals are decreased from twice a day to once a day.  All dogs should be fed at least twice a day (growing puppies three times a day) to prevent such chewing problems, as well as other potentially serious health problems.

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My Puppy Keeps Chewing What Do I Do?
Jeanneane Kutsukos

First, always keep in mind that it is natural for a puppy to chew. The puppy is not doing this to annoy you, but because it is a normal function of a puppy, just as it is in a human baby. Keep this in mind, and be sure not to ever hit or strongly punish the puppy for doing what is natural to it. Everything goes into the mouth, and everything is chewed.

Chew Toys!

What we need to do is to teach the puppy what is correct to chew on, and what is not. Be sure to supply your puppy with a variety of toys that are permissible for it to chew. Nylabones are excellent, but stay away from the ones with the sharp points on them. Watch carefully! When the knobs on the end are gone, you have to throw it away. There is also a Nylaring that costs a little more but lasts a lot longer.

Another good item is the Kong, which is made of hard rubber and lasts a long time. Please keep in mind that cheap toys are not worth the money, the puppy can destroy them too easily and can choke on the pieces that it chews. Chew ropes are also good, but again, watch to see if it starts coming apart. Take it away immediately at that point. Squeaky toys are also handy, but again, you must be careful to throw it away when it starts to get a hole. The squeaker can choke the puppy.

Teach Your Puppy What it CAN Chew!

Always have one of his chew toys handy. Each time the puppy chews on something other than one of the toys, firmly tell the puppy "no" and give the puppy one of his own chew toys. When the puppy starts chewing on the proper item, say "Good Puppy" (Good boy or good girl is fine also.) This teaches it what is acceptable to chew on and what is not.

The “Ouch” Method

Anytime the puppy is biting, and especially during a play session, say "ouch" and immediately stop playing. This lets the puppy know that the biting is unacceptable. This method is called "ouching" and everyone in the family should do it.

The Puppy-Proof Method

Use your intelligence to help keep the puppy away from unwanted chewing. If the pup chews on shoes, keep them in your closet with the door closed. Keep books and other chewables out of the pup’s reach. Go through your home (on your hands and knees if necessary) and look to see what is tempting for your puppy to chew on. Eliminate any unsafe or inappropriate items.

The Bitter Apple Method

Another handy aide to help prevent chewing -- is a product called Bitter Apple. It can be purchased at pet stores and through pet catalogs. Be sure to test spot it prior to spraying on a good piece of furniture. It must be reapplied daily, as it wears off in approximately 24 hours. There is also available a Bitter Apple for furniture that lasts longer.

Puppy’s Toy Box

You can have a toy box for your puppy and have all the toys kept in it. Then they are handy and you also know where to get one when you need one. The pup will eventually learn where they are and get a toy out by itself. Every once in a while, put a little treat (milk bones are great!) in the toy box to get the pup used to looking in it.

Be sure to use lots of praise anytime the pup is doing something right, whether it is chewing on the right toy, eliminating outside, sitting when told,

Destructive Chewing
by Tracy Atkins
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Chewing Highlights:
\*Chewing is a good behavior because it releaves stress.
\*Puppy's chew to loosen teeth and sooth gums.
\*Provide a good selection of toys (different tastes and tectures) for your dog.
\*Avoid inappropirate toys (wrong size or durability) for your pet.
\*Use Grannicks Apple Bitter or Tabasco Sauce to deter destructive chewing.
\*Teach your dog to chew on "his" toys by signaling to him "YES" and rewarding him when he does!
\*Discard any broken or easily swallowed toys. When your dog is busy chewing he isn't barking or digging!

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**Why does my puppy chew on EVERYTHING?**Puppies chew for many reasons.   The most common one is that they cutting new teeth.  This is not only painful, but it can also feel weird to have loose things dangling in your mouth!  Chewing on things helps sooth and loosen the gums around the teeth (many of which are chewed and swallowed along with whatever they else the puppy is chewing on!)

**My dog is almost two years old, and he still chews on everything!**
Many dogs chew to relieve stress and anxiety.  This doesn't mean you have an anxious dog.  It just means you dog knows that when he chews, he feels better. Chewing causes a chemical release of endorphins which actually sooth and calm your dog.  This is very good because it means that he will be less anxious when he is with you!

**You mean chewing is good?**
YES!  It helps reduce plaque on teeth and gums, it keeps teeth strong, it releases stress and it is the easiest dog behavior to channel!  I actually tell people CONGRATULATIONS!  You got lucky with a dog that likes to chew! Now all you have to do is channel that Destructive Chewing to become Constructive Chewing."   Simply teach him he can't chew on your stuff, but he can chew on his!

**But this destructive chewing is costing me an arm and a leg!  Where do I start?**
Start by getting six toys for the dog to chew on.  They should be of different varieties.  I suggest:  tennis ball, rope toy, Nylabone (original), Gummabone (transparent color), Kong (red variety), Sterilized Beef Bone sold at pet supply stores (Avoid the butcher bones as they are not hardened like the sterilized variety.)  If you must supply your dog with [**Rawhide**](http://www.doglogic.com/rawhide.htm) purchase only the "compressed [**Rawhide**](http://www.doglogic.com/rawhide.htm)" variety.  Regular "knotted" [**Rawhide**](http://www.doglogic.com/rawhide.htm) (the kind we see everywhere) do not break down in the intestinal tract and can cause serious stomach and intestinal problems. 

**My dog has tons of toys and he stills chews** **on everything!**
Most dogs can't discriminate between what is "yours" and what is "theirs" until they are trained!  Start by discarding all broken or dangerous toys. Clean, disinfect and dry the remaining toys.  Pick three toys and use those exclusively at first.  To train a dog to play with "his" toys you must first teach him that his toys are a reward.

**Teach my dog toys are good?  Shouldn't he know that already?**
Well, yes and no.  First off, dogs that are destructive chewers think that everything is a toy!  What we must do is teach him that toys are special and very different from a sofa leg.  One neat way to do this is to play with the dog using "his" toys.  In this way, he associates not only fun with you, but fun with his toys.  This increases the likelyhood that he will play with his toys when you are not around.  Allowing him to associate food with "his toys" is another good way to curb destructive chewing.  Simply fill a hollow toy with low fat, low sodium peanut butter or low fat cream cheese.  Allow the dog to lick out the filling and each time he licks - instant reward - Food!

**What kind of toys should I fill and what else can I put in a toy?**I like using a Kong or Sterilized Beef Bone because they are dog-safe, hollow and can be easily filled.  You can fill a toy with anything your dog likes. If your dog loves ice, put a bit of peanut butter to seal any holes in the toy.  Fill with water, freeze and presto - a true pupsicle!  Or you might fill it with canned dog food and freeze it.  Or you might just stuff it with puppy biscuits or small raw carrots.  Be sure to clean and disinfect the toy's after use however!  (Most toys are dishwasher safe for a good cleaning!) 

**What if he's chewing on my furniture?  What then?**
This is where owner responsibility comes in.  You, as the owner, must accept responsibility to teach the dog what to chew on.  But remember that it's easier (and more pleasant) to reward your dog frequently, rather than punish him frequently!   This means removing valuable or important items from his reach.  Either put those things away or keep the dog confined when you are not watching him.   Deterrents like Grannic's Bitter Apple® for Furniture or Tabasco Sauce® can be helpful in reducing destructive chewing, but they aren't a cure for destructive chewing and shouldn't replace good supervision.

**But what if I actually catch him actively chewing on my things?**
Keep it simple!  Make a noise "Aght" to startle him, then give him something he can chew on, and when he chews on his toy praise him with "YES, good dog!"

**DO NOT PUNISH HIM BY HITTING OR YELLING!**

**But I want him to know never to touch my things.  How will he learn if I don't discipline him?**
Most dogs will outgrow misbehavior if it isn't allowed to develop.  (In fact, if your dog doesn't have any major behavior problems by the age of two, he probably never will!)   Very simply put, dogs are reward based creatures. Dogs  will stop behaviors that do not earn them reward, but will CONTINUE behaviors that do earn them reward.  So,  NO!  You don't have to punish your dog to teach him not to chew!  Discipline is what we use to "train" when we haven't taken the time to train properly in the first place.

**When to dispose of dead toys and replenish them:**

Disposing of "dead" toys is very important.  Dead toys are toys that have been partially, or totally, destroyed.  Most toys will be destroyed, especially if you have an active chewer (remember active chewing is GOOD!).

For hard toys:

Discard any that have broken or sharp edges.
Discard any that are small enough that they may be swallowed.
Discard any toys that cannot be cleaned and sterilized monthly.  (This will reduce bacteria.)
Discard any solid raw hide toys that have been softened or pulled apart.

For soft toys:

Discard any rope toys that have been "pulled apart" (have no knotted ends).
Discard any lambswool or stuffed toys that have been pulled into bite-size pieces.
Discard any squeaker toys with loose squeakers.
Discard any soft toy that your dog could swallow or ingest.