

Dog: Chewing



Why Dogs Chew

Some reasons dogs chew: because it feels good, anxiety, attention-seeking, barrier frustration/escape behavior, pent-up energy, and hunger.

Note: Always rule out hunger first. Ask your vet about the appropriate diet for your dog.

Dogs are genetically hardwired to exercise their jaws, so chewing is a normal and enjoyable pastime for them throughout their lives. They have no concept of the value of your things and are not deliberately trying to upset anyone by chewing expensive Italian shoes rather than stuffed toys. From their point of view, all items are potential chew toys.

A dog gets into a chewie the way a human gets into a good book or movie. You have to direct this energy to keep your dog from improvising. To do this, you need to:

- A) Make unsuitable items unavailable. Place shoes, gloves, socks, and other temptations out of your dog's reach.
- B) Keep your dog supplied with an array of suitable and safe chew toys. Good choices are KONG® toys, rawhides, chew ropes, and hollow, sterilized bones that you can stuff.

Getting Your Dog Hooked on His Chew Toys

- **Make the toys attractive to your dog.** Praise him whenever he uses one. Hold them for him to get him started. Play hide and seek with him with stuffed chew toys so he learns to actively search for them. Ask him to bring you one when you come home after an absence.
- **Use food-dispensing toys.** Stuff sterilized bones with nutritious and delicious treats like peanut butter, freeze-dried liver, or cream cheese. Use treat balls or a device like the MannersMinder® for your dog's meals. Stuff KONG toys with cookie pieces of different sizes so some fall out more easily than others. Squeeze the hole to get in bigger pieces that are very difficult for the dog to extract.

Dogs really need problems to solve. Too many dogs get all their food for free when it is much more satisfying to their predatory nature to work for it.

Tips

- Chewing is often worse in dogs that are under-stimulated, under-exercised, or anxious about being alone. To reduce this kind of displacement chewing, provide your dog with daily, vigorous exercise, playtime, and training sessions.
- Until your dog is fully trained, keep him in his dog-proofed area or crate when you are out. Give him only an assortment of chew toys in this area; leave no other objects or furniture he might mistake for chewable items. Rotate the toys from day to day. Provide the best and most challenging stuffed toys for the longest absences.
- Never punish your dog for chewing on the wrong thing. He will only learn that it's dangerous to chew when you're present and will instead reserve chewing for when you're not present. If you catch your dog chewing something unauthorized, interrupt him without being too harsh ("Ah, ah! That's not for you."), and offer him a fabulous dog chew in exchange.