



Chewing – It’s Normal, It’s Natural, but It Doesn’t Have to Be Destructive

All dogs, puppies and adults, will naturally explore the world with their mouths. Additionally, consider that if you are adopting a puppy, he will be “teething” until he is about six months old, creating some discomfort that may be relieved by chewing. That doesn’t mean that you have to sacrifice your belongings to satisfy your dog’s natural urge to chew. It does mean, however, that until your dog or puppy learns what is appropriate to chew on and what is not, you will need to manage the situation as much as possible, so that your dog does not have the opportunity to chew on inappropriate objects.

Managing the Environment

- Don’t make inappropriate items available to your dog by cleaning up after yourself and by putting tempting items out of reach.
- Don’t let your dog play with old socks or shoes as a toy. He may not be able to distinguish between the old ones you gave him and the new ones you wanted to keep.
- Until your dog can be trusted, confine him to a safe, dog-proofed area or crate when you can’t supervise him.

Correcting Inappropriate Chewing

- Remember that you can only correct your dog for inappropriate chewing IF YOU CATCH HIM IN THE ACT. At those times, you should interrupt him with a loud noise, such as clapping your hands, and redirect your dog to an appropriate chew toy.
- Praise your dog lavishly when he takes the toy in his mouth and reward him with attention when he chews on his toys.

Preventing Destructive Chewing Problems

- Play with your dog in a safe, fenced-in area and go for walks daily. Exercise and relief from boredom or social isolation go a long way in preventing nuisance behavior like chewing for entertainment.
- Provide lots of appropriate chew toys, and interactive time with you to play with them as well. Rotate your dog’s toys to keep them interesting to him, or hide pieces of food in certain toys to keep him entertained.
- Provide mental stimulation, not just physical exercise. Teach your dog tricks and other fun behaviors, and take him to training class.