

Dog: Puppy Chew Training



Chewing is a normal and important activity for puppies and adult dogs. Lifetime habits form early and puppies need guidance in learning what is theirs to chew and what is not.

Puppy-Proof Your Home

Just as you would for a human toddler, you must safety-proof every room of your home that your puppy has access to until she is fully chew-trained. Remember to remove or safely hide chewable and potentially dangerous household items.

For example:

- Keep cables, wires, window treatments, and garbage cans out of reach.
- Remove rugs and planters if your puppy has access to them.
- Close bedroom and closet doors.
- Move out of reach small items such as batteries, remote controls, children's toys, books, pens, candles, sunglasses, socks, shoes, etc.

For items you can't move but want to protect, such as furnishings, pet stores sell bitter tasting sprays that can deter chewing. Anytime you're not supervising your puppy, place her in her crate or puppy playpen (her puppy-proofed safe area) with appropriate toys and chews.

Essential Chew Toys

Both when confined and when supervised make sure your puppy has access to toys and chewies. Here are some guidelines:

- Feed your puppy all her meals in puzzle toys instead of a food bowl.
- Try out a wide variety of food puzzle toys. They are designed to promote healthy chewing and mental and physical stimulation for puppies and dogs.
- KONG® toys and kibble balls are great starter toys, and help teach your puppy how to get the kibble out.
- Once your puppy has learned how to use a KONG, you can make it more challenging by mixing the kibble with wet puppy food, a spoonful of cottage cheese, peanut butter, etc.
- A frozen KONG, bully stick, pig ear, or sterilized marrowbone stuffed with food is also a great way to give your puppy a lengthy activity to engage in.
- Always supervise the first time you give your puppy a new chew to make sure she chews it safely.
- Never give your puppy rawhide chews that can cause intestinal obstruction.
- Rotate the toys and balls you use. A toy that has been put away for a few weeks is as exciting as a new toy when you give it back.

Supervision, Exercise, and Training

The keys to reducing unwanted chewing and problem behaviors in your puppy are supervision, enough daily exercise and play, and patient training. When your puppy isn't in her playpen or crate, you must closely supervise your puppy for her training to be effective:

- Play with your puppy and her toys.
- **Interrupt** your puppy as soon as she goes to chew, dig, or pick up something that isn't hers, but don't scare her. Say, "oh oh" and gently clap your hands.
- **Praise** your puppy as soon as she stops and **redirect** her to a toy that belongs to her.

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- Don't give a treat immediately after inappropriate chewing, as your puppy will soon learn that it's a good game to play to get treats.

Avoid Punishment

Punishment is unfair and unkind. Parents kindly interrupt a toddler about to scribble on a wall with a crayon and redirect her to a coloring book. Puppies require the same level of vigilance on your part in order to learn the house rules.

Instead, follow these golden rules to get a well chew-trained puppy:

1. Create a safe environment.
2. Provide exercise and chew activities.
3. Supervise, supervise, supervise.
4. Interrupt and redirect.
5. Reward good choices.