

# Chewing

Chewing is a normal and enjoyable activity for dogs throughout their lives. Dogs interact with the world with their mouths. Using their mouths is how they eat, play, explore, pick things up, etc. Not only is chewing natural for dogs, but it has health benefits as well (so long as they're chewing the right things). Here is how to teach your dog what they can and cannot chew.



## Exercise

There is a saying that “**a tired dog is a good dog**”. Sometimes a dog chews for no other reason than they are bored, so we need to make sure that we are meeting the dog’s physical and mental needs. Mental stimulation can include training games, puzzle toys, even a Kong stuffed with either treats or their meal. A dog can run around the yard for an hour and still have stores of energy (or at least enough for chewing!), but put that same dog in front of a puzzle toy that takes them fifteen minutes and suddenly you have one pooped pup!

## Access

Your dog can’t chew on what she can’t reach. Keep all personal items like shoes, kids toys, and remotes out of your dog’s reach. If you need to cook dinner, make a phone call, or get involved in some other task that takes your attention away from your dog, have a dog-proof area. This can be a penned-off area or even the dog’s crate. It’s not a punishment, so make sure your dog has plenty of positive things to keep them occupied. (One of the many benefits of crate training is to prevent destructive behaviors like chewing.)

## Redirect

We need to teach them what they ARE allowed to chew on, not just the don’ts. If you catch your dog chewing on something they shouldn’t, interrupt them with a neutral noise that gets their attention (for example, a mild “eh eh” or “no” or a light clap of your hands.) Offer them an appropriate toy or chew as a means of redirecting their chewing. While your dog is in the process of learning these dos and don’ts, offer lots of praise every time your dog picks up one of their chew toys.



## Attention-Seeking

Some dogs figure out that any attention is better than none, and they know they'll get your attention if they misbehave.

- Make sure your dog gets plenty of positive attention every day - playing, walking, grooming, or even just cuddling.
- Ignore bad behavior, and reward good behavior. Give your dog treats and praise when he's playing quietly with appropriate toys.
- Make his favorite off-limits chew objects unattractive or unavailable to him.
- Teach your dog a "drop it" command so when he does pick up an off-limits item, you can use your command.

## Separation Anxiety

Dogs with separation anxiety may show signs like following you from room to room, frantic greetings when you get home, and anxious behavior when you start getting ready to leave. They may chew on inappropriate things when you're gone due to this anxiety. See more information on separation anxiety and how to work with your dog.



**Your dog will, at some point, probably chew up something of yours. This is often part of the transition to a new home. Your dog needs time to learn the house rules and you need to remember to keep things out of reach. Until he learns the house rules, confine him when you're not able to keep an eye on him. Choose a safe place, like a crate or bathroom, that is dog-proof with fresh water and appropriate chew toys.**