

## Puppy Chewing

Chewing and mouthing are normal behaviors for puppies. All puppies chew! This inherited tendency is very strong in a young dog. Young puppies use their mouths to investigate their surroundings and learn about their environment. They are also encouraged to chew when they are cutting their baby teeth and growing their adult teeth. Your success in preventing chewing problems depends on your ability to channel your pup’s natural tendency toward acceptable chew toys rather than household items. The following suggestions will help prevent chewing problems:

➤ **Confine the puppy to a crate or small, safe room when you cannot closely supervise him.**

The most important part of preventing chewing problems is supervision and confinement to a safe area when the puppy cannot be supervised. This is necessary for most dogs at least through the first year of life. Some dogs will continue to chew and be destructive throughout their lifetime if left unsupervised or unconfined. Dogs that chew require confinement for their own safety as well as to protect your house and valuables. Confinement can be achieved with the use of a crate or pen or a small room can be puppy “proofed”. If the puppy is confined to a room make sure to put all potentially dangerous or toxic items well out of reach. Make everything the puppy can reach taste bad with special sprays, such as Apple Bitter, or with cayenne pepper in Vaseline. Dogs have been known to damage furniture, curtains, carpets, and even chew through dry wall so give careful consideration to the place you decide to confine your pup.

➤ **Provide a variety of safe, durable chew toys.**

To encourage the puppy to chew on appropriate items you should invest in a wide variety of safe, durable rubber, nylon, and rawhide chew toys. Good choices include tough rubber toys such as Kong toys, Nylabone products, knotted rope toys (unless your dog shreds them), and large knotted rawhide bones or rawhide chips. Do not ever give your puppy real beef, chicken, or pork bones.

➤ **Avoid unsafe or confusing toys.**

Certain toys should be avoided or used only during supervised playtime. These include soft rubber “squeaky” toys, stuffed toys, wooden toys, or any other toys that could potentially be chewed into small pieces of indigestible material. Do not confuse the pup by giving him any toys that resemble your possessions which you don’t want him to chew on, such as old shoes, socks, towels, clothing, etc.

➤ **Teach the puppy to chew on his toys and to avoid other items.**

Actively encourage the puppy to chew on the toys by praising when the puppy picks up or plays with a toy. You can entice the puppy to chew the toys by lacing or rubbing them with food, such as low fat soft cheese, peanut butter, meat juice, etc. In addition, you can occasionally give a food treat when the puppy is chewing on a toy. If you catch the puppy in the act of chewing on something he shouldn’t, immediately scold him, then replace the object with a toy and PRAISE when it takes the toy. Remember to NEVER scold the puppy unless you actually catch it in the act. Scolding afterward accomplishes nothing because the puppy does not make the association between the punishment and its previous behavior.

With confinement and supervision in addition to teaching the puppy to chew only appropriate toys, you can prevent chewing and destruction problems.