

PICK OF THE LITTER

DOG TRAINING



CHEWING

Dogs are born into this world knowing how to be a representative of the canine community and chewing is natural behavior for any dog to perform. The problem occurs when a dog chews on inappropriate items, such as clothing, children's toys, household items, and even furniture, instead of appropriate items like their own toys and bones.

Chewing occurs for a number of different reasons. First of all, during the first six months of life, a puppy is constantly losing old teeth and growing in new ones. This inevitably causes pain for the puppy, just as it would in a teething child. Dogs often relieve this pain by chewing on any item that is available to them. Without knowing, the dog persists at chewing on items that we have deemed inappropriate. Second, dogs often chew because they find themselves under stimulated, both mentally and physically, and have found a way to combat this boredom. Third, many breeds of dogs, including retrievers and terriers, have been specifically bred to use their mouths to investigate and learn about the world, so chewing is genetically preprogrammed.

- **Provide Appropriate Chew Items:** try stuffing a Kong with peanut butter, yogurt, canned dog food, cheese, etc. (the Kong can be frozen and even hidden throughout the house or yard). Rope toys can be dampened and frozen for a fun treat. Pig ears, nylabones, and greenies are other great chew items. Chew bones are helpful to have available and can be livened up with a bit of peanut butter to make them more interesting. Rotate toys for even greater enjoyment
- **Redirect Inappropriate Chewing:** When the dog attempts to chew on something he should not, distract him with a more interesting, but appropriate, item. Use the command "drop it" and when he drops the inappropriate item, immediately provide him with the appropriate item in exchange as a reward.
- **Teach "Drop It":** When your dog is chewing on something that he has decided is too important to give up, grab a favorite food treat and show the treat to your dog. When your dog drops the item in exchange for the food treat, use the command "drop it", give him the treat and take away the item.
- **Confinement:** When you are not home or cannot keep a close eye on your dog, confine your dog to an appropriately sized crate or a small, uncarpeted room blocked with a baby gate. A small confined space can act as a "den", which provides a quiet place to rest and relax and prohibits your dog from being destructive while you are away. Provide a well stuffed Kong to keep your dog occupied. When you are comfortable that the chewing habit has been broken, you can then gradually give him more and more freedom and less confinement (i.e. one room, then two rooms, then three rooms, etc.).
- **Keep a Close Eye:** When you're home, and your dog is loose, you can tie his leash to your belt or waist while you move around the house, or tie him to a couch or table leg if you're watching TV or eating dinner.
- **Mental and Physical Exercise:** (1) provide your dog with a stuffed Kong toy every day (2) sprinkle your dog's dry dog food around the house instead of feeding him from his bowl (3) spend time every day working on obedience skills (4) take your dog on two brisk walks each day.
- **Taste Deterrent:** Bitter Apple is a foul tasting substance that can be applied on just about anything to deter your dog from chewing on that item.