



Jasper County Animal Rescue League and Humane Society  
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## Canine Chewing

### Why do dogs chew?

- To explore the world around them especially if they are young puppies or adolescent dogs (3 years or under).
- To relieve pain from teething. Just like human babies, puppies usually between the ages of 3 to 6 months chew to relieve some of the discomfort as adult teeth are coming in.
- Boredom – Dogs that are not provided with adequate outlets for energy find ways to entertain themselves.
- Attention Getting – some dogs chew to get their owner's attention. Even if it is negative attention like scolding, it is still attention.
- Anxiety or fear – dog's that are anxious about something like being left alone (separation anxiety) or noises (fireworks) chew to relieve the anxiety or in attempt to escape.

### How can I discourage chewing on inappropriate items?

First determine why your dog or puppy is chewing and then follow the recommendations below.

If your dog is a puppy or an adolescent or if he is being left alone for long periods of time:

- Take your dog to Bone Jour dog day care a few times a week to break up the routine.
- Dog proof your house- make everything you don't want the dog to chew on unavailable. Make sure the kids pick up their toys
- Provide the dog with appropriate chew toys. Try a variety of types to see what your dog likes the best. Kong type toys that you can stuff food treats in will reward and encourage the dog to chew on his toys. (See our Dog Toys handout)
- Until the dog learns what he can and can't chew on, you must supervise the dog at all times. Using baby gates or a long leash to tether the dog to you can help you supervise him.
- When you can't supervise the dog put him in a kennel or a dog proof room.
- Do not confuse the dog by allowing him to play with old socks or shoes. He can't distinguish between old items and new ones.
- Take the dog obedience classes and practice the new commands daily.
- Provide appropriate outlets for the dog's energy by increasing his people time. Spend at least 20 minutes twice a day playing fetch or hide and seek with your dog.
- Walk your dog daily. This is a good way to exert physical and mental energy for both of you.
- Teach your dog the leave it command so if you catch him in the act, you can interrupt the chewing with the command. Reward the dog when he leaves the item alone.

- Make inappropriate items undesirable by spraying them with bitter apple or any taste aversive.

If your dog is chewing to get your attention:

- Provide appropriate outlets for the dog's energy by increasing his people time. Spend at least 20 minutes twice a day playing fetch or hide and seek with your dog.
- Walk your dog daily. This is a good way to exert physical and mental energy for both of you.
- Give your dog positive attention when he is behaving appropriately like when he is chewing on *his* toys.
- Take your dog to obedience classes and practice the new commands every day.
- Teach your dog the leave it command so if you catch him in the act, you can interrupt the chewing with the command. Reward the dog when he leaves the item alone.

If your dog is chewing out of fear:

- Provide your dog with a safe place. Usually the dog needs to decide where the safe place will be. If you put him in a crate and he doesn't feel safe there then he will only feel trapped instead.
- Don't comfort the dog when he is anxious. Instead try to get him to play or respond to commands then reward him for the desired behavior.
- If you feel your dog is suffering from separation anxiety, see our handout for guideline on how to resolve the problem.

**What NOT to do:**

- Never punish after the fact. Dogs do not correlate punishment with the chewing unless it occurs within 3 seconds of the behavior.
- People assume that their dog knows he has done wrong because of the "guilty look". Dogs do NOT feel guilt, instead they display submissive postures when they feel threatened. Angry people's tone of voice and body postures appear threatening to your dog. The dog doesn't know that he has done something wrong only that you are upset.