

Taking Control by Managing the Situation

- Take responsibility for your own belongings: If you don't want it in your dog's mouth, don't make it available.
- Don't confuse your dog by offering him shoes and socks as toys and then expecting him to distinguish between his shoe and yours. Your dog's toys should be clearly distinguishable from household goods.
- Until he learns the house rules, confine him when you're unable to keep an eye on him. Choose a "safe place" that's dog proof, and provide fresh water and "safe" toys. If your dog is crate trained, you may also place him in his crate for short periods of time. If your dog is not crate trained you should crate train him. (Please refer to our handouts "Crate Training Your Dog" and "Crate Games")
- Give your dog plenty of people time. Your dog won't know how to behave if you don't teach him alternatives to inappropriate behaviour, and he can't learn these when he's by himself.
- Have realistic expectations. At some point your dog will inevitably chew up something you value; this is often part of the transition to a new home.
- If, and only if, you catch your dog chewing on something he shouldn't, interrupt the behaviour with a loud noise, offer him an acceptable chew toy instead, and praise him lavishly when he takes the toy in his mouth.

Chewing is normal behaviour for curious puppies who may be teething, but adult dogs may engage in destructive chewing for any number of reasons. In order to deal with the behaviour, you must first determine why your dog is chewing—and remember he's not doing it to spite you.

Play, Boredom, and/or Social Isolation

Normal play behaviour sometimes leads to destruction, as it may involve digging, chewing, shredding, and/or shaking toy-like objects. Your dog may be chewing for entertainment if:

- He's left alone for long periods without opportunities to interact with you.
- His environment is relatively barren, free of playmates or toys.
- He's a puppy or adolescent (under three years old) and he doesn't have other outlets for his energy.
- He's a particularly active type of dog (like the herding or sporting breeds) that need to be occupied to be happy.

Separation Anxiety

Dogs with separation anxiety tend to display behaviours that reflect a strong attachment to their owners. This includes following you from room to room, frantic greetings, and anxious responses whenever you prepare to leave the house. The factors that contribute to the anxious behaviour need to be addressed. You should seek the help of a professional dog trainer.

Attention Seeking Behaviour Solutions

- Make sure your dog gets a lot of positive attention every day, such as: playtime, walks, grooming, or just petting.
- Ignore bad behaviour (as much as possible) and reward good behaviour.
- Make his favorite "off-limits" chew objects unattractive or unavailable to him. Use taste aversives (such as bitter apple spray, that is available in the Calgary Humane Society store) on objects that cannot be put away.
- Teach your dog a "drop it" command, so that when he does pick up an "off limits" object, you can use the command and praise him for complying. The best way to teach "drop it" is to practice exchanging the item in his possession for a treat or toy.
- Practice the concept of "Nothing in Life is Free" with your dog. (please refer to the Calgary Humane Society's handout on "Nothing in Life is Free").

Solutions

- Play with your dog daily in a safe, fenced in area.
- Go for a walk. Walks should be more than just "bathroom time." On leash walks are important opportunities for you and your dog to be together. Don't forget to allow time for sniffing, exploring, instruction, and praise.
- Increase your dog's opportunities for mental stimulation. Teach your dog a few commands or tricks and practice them daily. Take a dog training class; not only are they fun, but such classes teach commands important for your dog's safety!
- Provide your dog with lots of toys.
- Rotate your dog's toys to refresh his interest in them. "New" toys are always more interesting than old ones.
- Try different kinds of toys, but when you introduce a new toy, keep an eye on your dog to make sure he won't tear it up and ingest the pieces.
- Consider the various types of toys that can be stuffed with food. Putting tidbits of food inside chew toys helps your dog focus on these toys rather than on unacceptable objects.
- Make your dog's favorite "off limits" chew objects unattractive to him by covering them with heavy plastic, aluminium foil, hot pepper sauce, or a commercial chew deterrent product.
- Consider a good "doggie day care" program or hire a dog walker or have a friend walk and play with her to help your dog work off some of her excess energy.
- Ensure that you redirect your dog to appropriate items to chew. You need to teach your dog which items are acceptable to chew and which are not.
- Crate train is an excellent way to manage your dog, prevent behaviour problems and providing a safe location for them to relax while you are not home.

The Calgary Humane Society's store has a variety of interactive toys, appropriate chew toys to mental stimulate your dog and carries a selection of crates.