



DESTRUCTIVE CHEWING

Chewing is normal behaviour for curious puppies who may be teething or learning with their mouths, however, adult dogs may engage in destructive chewing for any number of reasons. In order to change the behaviour, you must first determine the reason 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 two 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 requires breed-specific stimulation

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 anxious behaviour need to be addressed. You should seek the help of a certified professional dog trainer.

Attention Seeking Behaviour Solutions

- Make sure your dog gets a lot of positive attention every day, such as playtime, walks, and mental stimulation through enrichment
- Ignore bad behaviour or redirect to what is appropriate to chew on and reward good behaviour
- Make his favorite "off-limits" chew objects unattractive or unavailable to him.
- Teach your dog a "drop it" cue, so that when he does pick up an "off limits" object, you can use the cue 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.



Solutions

- Play with your dog daily in a safe, fenced-in area
- Go for a walk. Leash walks are important opportunities for you and your dog to be together. Don't forget to allow time for sniffing, and exploring
- Increase your dog's opportunities for mental stimulation. Teach your dog a few cues or tricks and practice them daily. Take a dog training class; not only are they fun, but such classes teach cues 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.
- Consider a good "doggie daycare" program or hire a professional 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 what items are acceptable to chew and which ones that are not.
- Crate train is an excellent way to manage your dog, prevent behaviour problems, and provide a safe location for them to relax while you are not home

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

Managing the Situation

- Take responsibility for your own belongings: Pick up and put away items such as socks, and shoes so your dog is unable to practice the behaviour
- Confine him when you're unable to keep an eye on him. Choose a "safe place" that's dog proof, and provides 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 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, your dog may chew up items or objects in the home. Punishment does not discourage the behaviour and may cause fear and aggression in your dog
- If, and only if, you catch your dog chewing on something he shouldn't, interrupt the behaviour offer him an acceptable chew toy instead, and praise him lavishly when he takes the toy in his mouth

If you find you are struggling with managing your dog's destructive chewing, you can always call our Help Line at 403-723-6019 or book a consultation via our website at

<https://www.calgaryhumane.ca/what-we-do/animal-training/private-consultations/>