

Chewing and Destructive Behavior

Why do dogs chew on things?

Dogs explore the world with their mouths and chewing is often a part of that exploration. There are several reasons why normal dog chewing might become destructive, including boredom, anxiety, stress, or an overabundance of energy. Set your dog up for success by limiting their access to *illegal* chewing and giving them easy access to *legal* chewing.



Manage Illegal Chewing and Destructive Behaviors

Tip 1. Limit your dog's access to things you don't want them to chew on. This includes any personal valuables, scent-rich clothing, and food!

Tip 2. Provide varied [Enrichment](#) activities every single day. Brainwork helps prevent boredom, depletes daily energy reserves, and helps to soothe anxiety and stress.

Tip 3. Give your dog plenty of exercise! Physical activity can increase feel-good chemicals and help soothe your dog.

Tip 4. Take a reward-based training class with your dog to strengthen communication and build a foundation of good manners.

Reward Your Dog for Legal Chewing

Step 1. Provide your dog with several chew toys of varying sizes, shapes and material.

Step 2. Encourage engagement with appropriate chews by smearing them with peanut butter or dipping them in dog-safe broth.

Step 3. Praise your dog for engaging their chew toys. Let them know you approve!

Should I punish my dog for destructive behavior?

Making a big fuss when your dog chews on something inappropriate can have unintended consequences. You may accidentally make the object more exciting than regular chew toys.

If your dog chews on something *illegal*, calmly remove the object by trading with a tasty treat. Avoid punishing your dog, and make a mental note to keep the object out of reach in the future.

Support Legal Chewing

All dogs chew, though chewing preferences vary between dogs. Experiment with size and age appropriate chew toys to determine your dog's chewing preferences! Some ideas include:

Natural Chew Toys: Bully Sticks, Pigs Ears, Antlers, Hooves, and Bones

Synthetic Chew Toys: Brands such as [Kong](#) and [West Paw](#) offer a variety of synthetic chew toys.

DIY Chew Toys: Frozen Mini Bagels, Frozen Carrots, and Frozen Knotted Rags and Socks are fun DIY chew alternatives!

For more resources, check out <https://sfhumanesociety.org/behavior-library/>