

# Keeping Chewing in Check

Dogs with Wings Assistance Dog Society | November 2014

Chewing is a perfectly normal behaviour for puppies and adult dogs, but it can become a major problem if you can't find a suitable way of keeping the habit under control. Puppies and dogs chew for all kinds of reasons, such as boredom relief, teething, and gaining information from the environment. Puppies in particular can chew through things at an alarming rate. Before you can address your pet's chewing habits, it's a good idea to understand how a dog's mind works. Most importantly the fact that dogs don't think the same way as humans do.

## Understanding the Need to Chew

Puppies are inquisitive and may engage in some investigative chewing if they hear any unusual or high pitched sounds from unforeseen areas. They may also chew when they are hungry, especially if their regular feeding time has been delayed, or if they smell spilled food. It is therefore important to give your dog plenty of suitable chewing material and mental stimulation. Once again, one of the best overall things you can do for your dog is get him his exercise and social interaction.

## Dogs Aren't Picky

If you give your dog an old pair of shoes to chew, it is not going to know the difference between an old pair of shoes and your brand new pair by the door. Stuffed toys will also look the same as the corner of your sofa as far as your dog is concerned. To ensure that your puppy understands what it can and can't chew in your home, you will need to be prepared to set out some important guidelines for it to follow. A second dog won't necessarily keep him busy and not chewing. If boundaries haven't been set, you may end up having two dogs that chew everything in sight instead of one.

## Setting Boundaries

Make sure that your dog is never left unattended until it has learnt to follow certain household rules. You may need to initially house your dog in a safe room, travel crate, or other segregated area when you are unable to watch it carefully or need to leave it alone in the house.

When setting boundaries for your dog, it is important to remember that you should never smack or shout at it for chewing. Your dog may then grow up to be shy and fearful of people. It may even encourage your pet to chew even more in an attempt to calm itself down.

Gently correct your dog's behaviour by trying to get its attention away from the object it is chewing by offering it a more suitable alternative. Never be tempted to wrestle with your dog over a particular object, as this will only end up turning the situation into a game. If possible, take the offending object away and put it out of sight so that your companion is no longer tempted to chew it.

You could try spraying the areas you don't want your dog to chew with apple cider vinegar or lemon juice. This can also be sprayed onto items of old clothing to direct your puppy's attention away from areas like your sofa and chairs, but do so at your own risk.

## Choosing the Right Toys

Always make sure that any toys you purchase for your dog are safe and non-toxic. Your dog may prefer one particular type of toy over another, so it may be a case of trial and error until you find the most suitable toys. Once you find a particular type of toy that appeals to your dog, buy more of the same type.

Hollow rubber toys are often a good idea for dogs, as you can hide treats inside that will help to keep them occupied and as cited in a previous article, 'work' for their food. Teaching your dog to fetch toys is also a good way of encouraging it to play with the toys you provide for it.

Remember that it is necessary to spend as much time as possible playing with your dog, as this will help to keep it happy, occupied, and eventually too tired to engage in any more unwanted chewing.

## *About Dogs with Wings:*

*Dogs with Wings is a leader in the international community of assistance dog training schools. The organization exists to serve people with disabilities. They work collaboratively, and in partnership with other organizations that provide assistance*

*dogs to people with disabilities.*

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