

Why Do Puppies Chew, and How to Stop It

Chewing is a common complaint among those caring for dogs younger than a year old. They're likely to chew for several reasons. For one, they're curious creatures and they don't have opposable thumbs. Their mouths are how they examine objects. Also, from four to eight months of age, they will shed all of their puppy teeth and grow a set of permanent teeth. Chewing helps with teething discomfort. Also, chewing gives a bored pup something to do, and dogs with separation anxiety will likely chew their owners' items. Finally, some dogs, such as retrievers, were bred to use their mouths.

So how do you stop it?

- Create a safe haven for your puppy: Use a dog crate or small, carefully dog-proofed area. When dog-proofing an area, get down at puppy eye level to scope out potential problems such as electrical wires or drapery cords. When you can't supervise your puppy, place him or her in this safe haven with an approved chew toy.
- Remember, the puppy does not need access to the entire house. Close bedroom doors or install pet gates during the animal's chewing period.
- Invest in a variety of chew toys appropriate to the size and chewing preferences of your dog. Check out Tri-County Humane Society's store for a variety of toys (all the proceeds go back to the animals). Watch your pet with the chew toy when he or she first tries it to make sure it's appropriate. Alternate the chewies to keep interest high. Save the best of them for crate time or when puppy is left alone.
- Give feedback. When the puppy eyes a table leg, say "eck" or "phooey" and then draw puppy's attention to acceptable chew toy. When you catch the puppy chewing on an appropriate toy, make sure to praise him or her with a treat.
- If the table leg or rug fringe remains your dog's favorite chew toy, use a commercial anti-chew create or spray.

Source: Jacque Lynn Schultz, CPDT