

# Dog Chewing and How to Redirect It

By Sherry Woodard, Best Friends animal behavior consultant.



Dog chewing is a normal canine behavior, especially for puppies who are exploring the world around them and learning how to use their mouths appropriately. So, instead of punishing your dog for chewing, try to embrace his chewing instinct by refocusing his attention to more appropriate objects.

Start by having an abundance of items around that are OK for your dog to chew on. To keep your dog interested in chewing on these items, try to have a variety of textures and shapes. If your dog starts chewing on an inappropriate item, simply offer him an appropriate one. When he begins to chew on it, give him lavish praise. You shouldn't allow your dog to chew on any of your possessions (even the ones that you don't mind

him chewing up), since he can't distinguish between an old worn-out shoe and a brand-new one.

## **Chew toys for dogs**

There are plenty of products on the market that are healthy and fun for your dog to chew on. Pet supply stores have a wide variety of durable rubber or nylon toys that satisfy a dog's urge to chew. Dog food puzzles that you can stuff treats into (like Kongs and Buster Cubes) can keep him occupied for a good long while and not only satisfy the urge to chew, but also offer brain work in the form of helping him to develop problem-solving skills.

You can fill the Kong (or other durable chew toy) with peanut butter, wet dog food mixed with dry, or a piece of cheese. If your dog empties the toy too quickly, experiment with different fillers. You can try filling the Kong with wet dog food and freezing it, or wedging a piece of hard cheese tightly inside the toy.

To prevent your dog from becoming bored, give him a variety of items to chew that offer different tastes, odors, textures and challenges. You can rotate the items — putting some away for a while and then bringing them out again — to keep up the novelty factor. Occasionally add new items to your dog's choices. Besides the above suggestions, many dogs love frozen carrots, cow hooves, bully sticks and Nylabones.

If your dog is very enthusiastic about chewing, make sure chew toys are available to him all the time, to prevent him from finding something else to chomp on that may be inappropriate. For example, put chew toys outside whenever you leave your dog in the yard for more than a few minutes. If you leave your dog unattended, make sure the objects he's chewing can't be ingested. You'll want to purchase high-quality chew items and avoid anything that is dyed or contains potentially hazardous materials.

In some cases, a dog will start guarding an object that he values very highly. For information on how to avoid and manage resource guarding, see [Dog Food Aggression: Prevention](#) and [Food Aggression in Dogs: Management](#).

Finally, keep in mind that dogs will chew out of boredom, so make sure your dog gets plenty of exercise and interaction with you on a daily basis.

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