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**Chewing In Dogs**

Chewing is a natural behavior for dogs. It helps them explore the world, deal with teething pain, and keep their teeth clean. However, chewing on things like shoes, furniture, or other personal items can become a problem. The good news is that you can teach your dog what to chew on and keep your belongings safe.

**Why Do Dogs Chew?**

There are several reasons why dogs chew:

* **Teething**: Puppies chew to soothe their gums when they are teething, which happens between three to six months but can last up to two years.
* **Exploration**: Dogs, especially young ones, use their mouths to explore new things.
* **Boredom**: If dogs are left alone for long periods or don’t have enough to do, they might chew out of boredom.
* **Instinct**: Chewing helps dogs keep their teeth clean and their jaws strong.

Once you understand why your dog is chewing, you can help them learn what’s appropriate to chew.

**Give Your Dog the Right Chew Toys**

One of the best ways to prevent your dog from chewing on things they shouldn’t is to give them safe, appropriate things to chew on. Some examples include:

* **Chew toys**: Look for toys made specifically for chewing and make sure they are the right size for your dog.
* **Edible chews**: These could be dental chews, bully sticks, or rawhides (if supervised).
* **Frozen toys**: You can freeze rubber toys or even a wet washcloth to help teething puppies. The cold helps soothe their gums.

Switch up the toys every now and then to keep your dog interested. If your dog gets bored with the same toys, they might start chewing on your furniture or shoes instead.

**Make Off-Limit Items Less Tempting**

It’s important to make items you don’t want your dog to chew on less appealing. You can do this by:

* **Using a deterrent spray**: There are pet-safe sprays, like bitter apple spray, that make things taste bad to your dog. Spray them on items you don’t want your dog to chew.
* **Removing tempting items**: Keep things like shoes, remote controls, or other chewable items out of your dog’s reach. You can also use baby gates to keep your dog in safe areas when you’re not watching them.

**Supervise And Redirect Your Dog**

Whenever you’re with your dog, keep an eye on them to make sure they aren’t chewing on anything they shouldn’t. If you catch your dog chewing on something inappropriate:

* **Interrupt calmly**: Use a gentle noise like “uh-uh” to get their attention.
* **Give them a chew toy**: Immediately give your dog something appropriate to chew on, like a chew toy, and praise them when they start using it.

Reward your dog for chewing on the right things. Positive reinforcement, like praise or a small treat, helps them learn faster. Over time, they’ll understand what’s okay to chew on and what isn’t.

**Keep Your Dog Busy**

Dogs often chew because they are bored. To prevent boredom, make sure your dog gets plenty of exercise and mental stimulation:

* **Exercise**: Take your dog for regular walks or play with them daily. A tired dog is less likely to chew on things they shouldn’t.
* **Mental stimulation**: Give your dog puzzle toys, treat-dispensing toys, or teach them new tricks. This keeps them busy and helps prevent destructive chewing.

Training or games like fetch can also help your dog release energy in positive ways.

**Use Confinement When You Can’t Supervise**

If your dog tends to chew on things when you’re not around, confining them to a safe space can help. Some options include:

* **Crate training**: A crate gives your dog a safe place to stay when you can’t watch them. Make the crate a positive space by providing a chew toy or stuffed Kong™.
* **Confinement areas**: You can use baby gates to block off rooms with things you don’t want chewed or set up a playpen where your dog only has access to their toys.

This isn’t a long-term solution, but it can help protect your belongings while you’re training your dog to chew on the right things.

**Never Use Punishment**

Don’t punish your dog for chewing, especially after the fact. Punishment won’t help them understand what they did wrong and could make them afraid or confused. Instead, clean up the mess calmly and focus on redirecting their chewing to appropriate items next time.

**When To Get Professional Help**

If your dog’s chewing is extreme or seems hard to control, it might be a good idea to ask for help from a professional trainer or behaviorist. They can assess your dog’s behavior and help you create a training plan that works for your dog.

By giving your dog appropriate things to chew on and reinforcing good behavior, you can help keep your dog and your belongings safe.