



Chewing

Puppies use their mouths much like we humans use our hands: to investigate and communicate. This is natural and necessary. Chewing is essential for healthy teeth and jaws in dogs. In addition, puppies need to chew to relieve inflammation and tenderness from teething.

Teaching your puppy to chew appropriate items involves preventing him from chewing inappropriate things and directing (i.e., rewarding!) him to chew acceptable items.

Appropriate chew toys need to be indestructible and non-consumable, some examples include: Kongs, Benebones and sterilized bones. Note, raw bones may be used if under your direct supervision; otherwise, use sterilized bones since he will not be able to break off pieces.

The advantage of some of the above chew toys is you can feed your puppy his food (kibble, canned or raw) within the toy. After he gobbles up the food he will chew on the toy itself. Be sure to praise him when he is chewing on items he is supposed to. Remember it is more effective to tell him WHAT to do, rather than what NOT to do.

You can even give this behavior a cue: Chew Toy. If he starts to gnaw on the coffee table leg, you can tell him, *Chew Toy*. And your puppy will stop chewing on that wooden popsicle and go to his Kong. Good Boy!

When you are away, crating your puppy is instrumental in his development of good house training habits. It is also key in preventing destructive chewing. Dogs chew

for numerous reasons: boredom, stress relief, entertainment. If you confine your puppy to his crate, he will not have access to the coffee table, pillows, remote control, electrical cords or any other interesting items around the house.

Provide him with an appropriate chew toy in his crate for those times he is likely to chew. Most chewing will happen shortly after you leave and shortly before you arrive home. So, do not think he will need to be occupied the entire time you are away. He will be sleeping most of the day since dogs have higher energy levels in the morning and evening.

Even after your puppy has his adult teeth, he may need chew toys for the duration of his life. He may not be as focused on chewing when he reaches adulthood, but he will still need to maintain healthy teeth and gums.

If you need help in controlling your puppy's destructive chewing, please give me a call.