

Dog or puppy chewing – Make it stop!!!!!!!

The following article is taken from Dr. Ian Dunbar's *Puppy Chewing Behavior Blueprint*.



If they are puppies they are going to chew. Puppies experience the world through their mouths and often mimic our use of hands by putting things in their mouths. Let's face it, those opposable thumbs are quite a keen tool. Without them we'd be sticking things in our mouths, too!

You must find out and pinpoint the chewing issue. Never, ever allow your pup to mouth you or your clothing. This is not a cute thing - it's a dominance game. The leader of the pack does not

allow themselves to be chewed on. By that same token, we must be careful to allow enough chewing to teach bite inhibition. This means that the pup can mouth you gently in order to learn that a soft mouth on you is acceptable but pressure or sinking in of needle sharp teeth is not! Begin by acting like a littermate would. If the pup is riled up and biting furiously at you, yelp or make a loud cry and get away from the pup ASAP! I mean walk away very quickly and if possible close a door in its face (bathroom or bedroom door) wait about 30 sec or so, not too long to let them get into trouble alone, then return and ignore the puppy. This shows them that no fun comes of biting hard or not listening. Play actually stopped when he bit too hard. From there, spraying some Bitter Lime, Bitter End or Bitter Apple (these can be purchased at your local pet store) on your hands, and if the pup wants to try and bite hard, give them a mouthful of wet hand soaked in that, or straight lemon juice. If that does not seem to deter them, spray them in the mouth with those same items. Make sure you are telling them something like "no bite" or "easy" before you spray, giving them fair warning. The Bitter items I mentioned have an alcohol base, so if you spray them too much you'll make the pup tipsy but no real permanent damage. Just be careful not to spray it in the eyes. Again, no permanent damage will occur, but it will be painful. If they are very young, shaking the scruff of the neck and growling or yelling "no bite" can help to teach them to stop mouthing you as well. Don't try the shake if they are older pups, say past 3 months. This can be taken as a sign of aggression and it can bring aggressive tendencies from your puppy.

Always have your hands on an alternate chew toy, like a squeaky toy (but don't let them tear it up), Kong, rope tug, or tennis ball or handball. Changing the focus on biting you to a toy can help as well. Never roughhouse with the pup, the way its littermates did, and it will cut down on how the pup views you as well. For further hints, ask a trainer to give you ideas and work with you to show you how to play with your pup and teach it the right way to act, instead of the wrong way. Remember: every day you are teaching your dog something, be it right or wrong. Your pup acts the way it does because you have helped form its behavior pattern, only you can change it. The dog doesn't learn what's Ok and not Ok by itself.

Destructive chewing:

I am a very big fan of crate training a puppy. If you cannot keep your eye on the puppy 24/7, you need to keep it in an area free from temptation to eat stuff. A crate or airline kennel can do a lot of the work for you. But be practical, if you find that the pup will be spending more than 7-8 hours at a stretch in the crate, don't bother. If you go to work and can let them out for lunch or at least make sure you are back in 8 hours, that's fine. When you go to bed, they can go back in the crate for the night. Before you leave for work the next day, let them out to potty, play and eat. Also, on weekends, they should be out more with you anyway. You need to supervise them in

each room and if they go to bite or chew something, take a can with pennies in it (shaker can) and reprimand them. Coat your electrical plugs with Vaseline and Cayenne pepper and let them try a lick on that! Actually, the mixture of Vaseline and Cayenne pepper works on baseboards, baby gates, steps, legs of tables, chairs, window ledges, etc. You may have to repaint a white surface, but it's better than replacing whatever it was that was chewed, and it is teaching the pup a lesson about putting their mouth on something that does not belong to them.

I cannot stress enough that you must have lots and lots of chew toys for the pups to use. Some examples:

Cow's hooves: 100% protein, and digestible – but please make sure when it gets down in size you throw it away. They may try to swallow them if too small.

Pig's ears: 100% protein, can be a little high in fat, good for puppies, but if they gain weight easily give only as a treat 1 every other week.

Rawhide bones: Only occasionally. Not digestible; comes out same form it went in!

Real knuckle bones or bones with marrow: They're OK, but watch for splintering or tooth breakage.

Nylabone products: Let them pick out their own!

Kong: It's indestructible and fun to stuff food products in. Great baby sitter if you want to watch a movie and don't want to put puppy in the crate but want them quietly eating the Kong while you watch. My best stuffed Kong recipe: (get the right size Kong for your dog's mouth; ask someone at the store if you don't know) First, a small piece of hot dog, then small piece of American cheese single or canned cheese spray, then a small dog cookie crammed in, more hot dog stuffed in the sides, topped off by a smear of peanut butter or cream cheese! Wow, there's an hour or more worth of fun! The Kong shape bounces, too!

Just remember: A puppy sheds teeth at around 5 months, so you haven't even seen chewing yet! For the rest of your dog's life they will still enjoy a good chew, so let them, but make it on the right things!

Also – if you are over feeding your dog, they could be chewing because they are hurting. Some dogs will chew out of true boredom or because they are in pain somehow. Ask a trainer for advice if your dog is turning into "Jaws" and you just can't take it anymore.