

There could be any number of reasons for dogs to exhibit destructive behavior in the home; however, the most common reasons include:

The need to chew

Dogs of all ages (yes, adult dogs too) need to chew on things regularly, both to exercise their jaws and satisfy their deeply rooted instincts to chew and rip things apart. It's just a normal part of being a dog. If you don't provide appropriate chew toys, dogs will find something on their own.

Boredom/Inactivity

Many pet dogs are underexercised and/or bored. If you're a dog, life in a human world can be hard! Many pet dogs spend a lot of time by themselves, waiting around for opportunities to interact with their people. That probably gets pretty dull. Virtually all dogs need jobs—ways to occupy themselves and outlets for their natural canine urges, like chasing, sniffing, tugging, digging and chewing. If you provide adequate mental and physical stimulation for your dog, it's much less likely that he'll come up with his own "jobs," like digging up flower beds, dissecting your couch and sampling your new heels.

Separation Anxiety

Dogs often chew and destroy things when left alone because they're anxious and lonely. Dogs are social animals, and they sometimes have trouble adapting to long periods of isolation. In response to this stress, many dogs resort to performing soothing, repetitive canine behaviors to relieve their anxiety. Some chew things up, some tear things apart, and some dig in dirt or on carpeting. Humans also engage in stress-relieving behaviors when anxious. Instead of gnawing on table legs, we engage in things like nail biting, pacing and fidgeting.

HOW TO PREVENT UNWANTED BEHAVIOR

Always supervise your dog when you're home together. Keep off-limits items out of reach and your eyeballs on him at all times. If he puts something in his mouth that he shouldn't, just redirect his attention to one of his own toys instead. If you can't directly supervise your dog, when you're at home or while you're away, put him in a crate or a dog-proofed room, free of things he might destroy.

Here are some great things to try:

- Provide plenty of inedible chew items, like Nylabones and hard rubber toys.
- Also provide edible chews, like rawhide, marrow bones, bully sticks and pig ears. (You'll want to stick around when you give your dog these, just to be sure that your dog doesn't swallow too big a piece of a chew and choke. If you're unsure about whether or not—or how often—you should give your dog edible chew things, call your veterinarian.)
- Try buying a few food puzzle toys. Using them will give your dog's brain and jaws a great work-out! Here are some of our favorites:
 - ~ The Kong: a tough, hollow rubber toy that you can fill with kibble, treats, soft dog food, a little cream cheese or peanut butter, etc. You can also freeze these toys after packing them with food/treats, so they pose more of a challenge to your dog.
 - ~ Buster Cubes: a hard, square puzzle toy that has a "maze" inside. You pour dry kibble into the toy, and then your dog rolls it around on the floor to get the food to come out, a few pieces at a time.
 - ~ Premier's Tug-a-Jug: a hard, hollow bottle-shaped toy with a rope attached. You can put food inside for your dog to get out AND use the Tug-a-Jug as an interactive tug toy too!

Additional Tips

- If you leave your dog alone and then return later to find that he's destroyed something, it is WAY TOO LATE to punish him. Your dog won't understand if you yell at him after the fact (even a minute or two later). He may look "guilty," but that's probably because he's learned that when you look unhappy - but he won't know why.
- Coating things your dog shouldn't chew with Grannick's Bitter Apple, a spray that tastes really bad but won't damage most furniture/objects.
- Rotate your dog's toys and chews to keep them interesting, and give your dog something new and exciting every once in a while.
- Digging, like chewing and other destructive behaviors, relieves boredom and stress. If your dog spends time alone in the yard and digs, consider reducing his time outside or make sure he has plenty of toys and things to chew on. Dogs also dig if they need a cool place to lie down, so be sure to provide shade and shelter for your dog when he's spending time outside, especially during warm weather.
- A tired dog is a good dog! Investigate options like doggie daycare and dog sports, like agility and flyball. Take your dog on walks or to dog parks on a regular basis. Teach your dog to fetch and tug. If you wear your dog out with training, games and exercise, he'll be way more likely to sleep like a dog log whenever he's left alone—instead of staying awake to chew, dig or destroy your stuff.