



Destructive in the Home

Dogs can be destructive and they destroy things for many different reasons. Some dogs are simply young and do not understand yet what is okay to chew and what isn't. Other dogs get stressed and anxious when you leave them alone and chew to express their frustration and relieve stress. The following are some tips and training you can use to help your dog adjust and learn to be okay on their own.

Puppy Play Destruction

If your dog is destructive and ripping things up while you are home and watching him as well as when you are gone, usually it is out of puppy destructiveness and simply not knowing it isn't okay to chew up your clothing or shred your pillows. This is one of the most common reasons for household destruction in young dogs.

- Try to supply enough exercise each day to wear your dog out when he is at home. Every dog gets worn out at a different rate, so watch him carefully and don't overdo it. Easy and effective ways to exercise your pup are brisk walks or jogs, playing fetch, or arranging playgroups and trips to dog parks.
- Appropriate mental stimulation can also help eliminate your dog's destructive tendencies. The mental stimulation found in playtime and training not only help to wear your dog out, but also help to establish you as the leader and best friend for your dog. Games like fetch, chase, or hide and seek are great mental and physical games. If training is more your thing, start with the basics like sit and stay, and work your way up from there.
- Most dogs have an inherent need to chew. Safe and interesting toys such as nylabones, Kongs filled with frozen peanut butter and treats, or Knucklebones are all great substitutions for your shoes or handbags. All of these are available at your local pet supply store. And do not let your dog chew on things you do not want him to, such as old worn out shoes or leashes, this will just confuse him as to what is okay and what isn't.
- Be sure to keep the things you do not want him chewing out of his reach when you are not watching him. Put away your clothes and shoes in a closet or dresser. When you leave the house, put your dog in a place where he cannot get to anything he could destroy such as a crate or small bathroom.
- Always supervise your dog while you are home. If you see him start to chew on the wrong thing, do not yell and scold him. Calmly tell him no and offer him something appropriate to chew. When he takes the appropriate item, praise him and reward him with attention and treats. Remember, to an untrained dog, all things are chewable. Be patient while he learns right from wrong.

- You can also put bad tasting spray on item you do not want him to chew that you cannot hide away such as sofa or electrical cords. Bitter-tasting sprays and ointments are available at most pet supply stores.

Separation Anxiety

Dogs with separation anxiety are only destructive when left alone. They may also cry or potty in the house. Dogs with separation anxiety mainly destroy things because they are stressed that you left and panic. They generally destroy things in an attempt to get to their people. They will chew doorways and windowsills, or tear up carpeting by doorways. Many dogs will display some signs of separation anxiety just after arriving at a new home. The following are some tips and tricks to help you help your dog to adjust to this change in their life.

- It is important to start working on the separation issues immediately when your dog enters your home. Start by leaving the house for short intervals right away when you bring him in the house. It is important to pay no attention to your dog during these departures.
 - Start by simply walking outside and closing the door, then coming right back in the house. If your dog does not panic, begin to slightly longer trips outside; take out the trash or pick up your mail.
 - Then begin to leave the house for 5-10 minute intervals. If you drive to work, actually get in your car and drive away for these short times and then return.
 - Over the first two days, attempt to progress to 30 minutes away from home with no panic. Always let your dog relax and calm down in between the departures and returns. If your dog begins to show signs of panic, slow down and wait three or four hours before the next departure.
 - Have patience! Remember, the goal is to have your dog relax when he is left alone. This will take some time.
- Do not make a big deal of your departures or your arrivals. If you make a big deal, you will teach your dog to do the same. Ignore your dog when you are leaving and don't have an excited party when you return.
- Although many dogs will be too anxious to eat when left alone, some will and when they do their anxiety is reduced. Leave your dog a yummy chew toy or a Kong, frozen, and stuffed with treats and peanut butter. Only give them these treats when you are out of the house, and pick them up when you return.
- While at home, discourage your dog from following you everywhere. Staying in another room will help your dog to learn that being alone is not so scary. Do not let your dog sleep next to you all the time. Resting and sleeping while not touching you will help your dog to feel more confident when he is alone.
- Practice "Nothing in Life is Free." This is a training program that teaches your dog to politely ask for things before they are given. This is an easy way to establish yourself as your dog's leader and to decrease their tendency to stick to you like glue. All you need to do is ask your dog to "sit" before doing anything; before being pet,

greeted, putting on a leash, opening the door, putting down the food bowl, giving a treat, throwing a ball, getting in the car, etc.

Fear of Noises

In some cases, the destruction stems from a dog severe fear of loud, sudden noises. Dogs who are afraid of thunder, backfiring cars, fireworks, or other loud sounds may destroy things in an attempt to hide and escape the sound. These dogs are only destructive if a loud noise occurs.

- If you can predict the timing of the noises (thunderstorm, 4th of July, etc.) then try to hide the sound by turning on a fan or your television set.
- Try having a “safe house” for your dog when you are away. Someplace dark and quiet that is protected from noise and that your dog associates with safety and quiet. Maybe a bathroom or a crate that is covered with blankets.