



THE DESTRUCTIVE DOG

by

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Why do dogs do bad things?! Well, one thing we must keep in mind is that, from the dog's perspective, the behavior may be perfectly normal, appropriate, even fun! Destructive behavior is one of those things that dogs think is perfectly fine, but humans think otherwise, especially if it's a favorite pair of sneakers or the molding around a door frame.



There can be many reasons why a dog might destroy things, and it's important to determine *why* he's doing what he's doing in order to solve the problem. So here are some considerations...

- 🐾 Some dogs are given too much freedom before they have developed good habits. Naturally we would like dogs to chew on their own toys but, if we do not supervise them enough at the start and they have the opportunity to chew on the wood furniture or on shoes, they can develop an unfortunate preference for these things. Providing appropriate alternative targets for chewing, along with supervising them, will be important for solving this problem.
- 🐾 Dog breeds like terriers are natural diggers, so we need to provide them with alternatives or they will wreak havoc on the flower beds! Check out *Yard Games* (http://mywoofgang.com/archive_VTC_yardGames.php) if this is something your dog does!
- 🐾 Dogs who are not getting enough exercise and mental stimulation may, when left alone, choose to relieve their boredom by chewing on the wrong things. Crate-train your dog so that, when he is left alone, he can be confined with food-stuffed puzzle toys to establish good chewing habits. And remember to give him plenty of exercise, because *a tired dog is a good dog!*
- 🐾 Some dogs suffer from separation anxiety, which is like a panic attack, when left alone. Often they will destroy an exit route, like chewing on a doorframe or busting through a window screen, or they may try to break out of their crate. They can become so panicked that they even injure themselves in the process. For a behavior

issue as serious as this, ask your parents to consult your dog's vet and enlist the help of a certified professional dog trainer.

- 🐾 Sometimes external activities, like watching squirrels, dogs or people outside of the window, or loud noises like passing garbage trucks, may frustrate or scare a dog. A dog may be destructive as a way of channeling his upset. Inhibit your dog's ability to look out the window and play calming classical music so that the time he is spending alone is more restful.
- 🐾 Some dogs lick or chew themselves, sometimes over and over again on the same spot to the point of injury. This may be due to physical distress like allergy, pain or disease. But this may also be an effort to soothe themselves if they are feeling anxious. Ask your parents to make an appointment with your dog's vet.

Whatever the cause of your dog's destructive behavior, you will need to be patient and understanding as you help him to be a better dog!