



Dog Learning

The Dog Learning Centre

Mouthing/Chewing

Pups use their mouth and teeth to explore their world in the way we use our hands, this is a normal dog behaviour. Puppies teethe up until around 7 months of age (they should have a full set by 8 months), and chewing helps to alleviate the discomfort of teething. Chewing is a stress reliever and releases endorphins (feel good hormones).

Incisors 2-5 months Canines 4-6 months Pre-molars 4-7 months Molars 5-7 months

It is vital at this stage that you manage your dog's environment. Anything you do not want chewed must be out of the dog's reach, behind puppy gates or up high. Anything your dog can chew is fair game to them. Your puppy won't think 'these are her favourite slippers, this is naughty but I can't help myself', he will simply think 'wow! This is enjoyable!'. You cannot train your puppy when you are not present, so set them up for success and only leave things out for them that you are happy for them to chew on. This must be appropriate puppy chewing material. It is innate behaviour for puppies to chew and it is best to provide an array of toys for them to choose from. If they like to chew on wood provide antlers for them, if they like leather then offer them rubber toys.

There is a huge choice on the market for dog toys; soft, squeaky, hard, rubber, plastic etc. You can pop certain toys in the fridge or freezer, or, wet the soft toys under a tap and these can be used as soothers for sore teeth and gums. Puppies must be supervised with all toys in case of choking. Kong feeders are unlikely to present a choking hazard (these are excellent crate companions) but all other toys should be removed when pup is alone.

Puzzle enrichment feeders are a great way to get your pup using their brain in order to work out how to get the food out! The pup's will instinctively use their mouths and this can channel the chewing urge.

Dogs in general adore the attention of their people and in this way, we can shape and train their behaviour. If a puppy receives attention for chewing on something they shouldn't, there is a chance they will repeat this behaviour (even if the attention is negative). Having a chew, a 'chase' from you, even if they're told to stop or have the item removed from their possession, it can turn into a fun game for them. When your pup has something they shouldn't, use one of their toys to gain their attention and swap it with them. You may need to become animated and 'play' with the toy yourself so that your pup curiously wonders what Mum or Dad has! Give the toy to your dog when they show an interest and praise them for making a good choice.

In a nutshell

- Manage the Pup's environment, ensure the items you don't want chewed are out of reach
- Provide an array of toys for pup to chew on and rotate them weekly to keep it exciting
- Freeze soft toys as an extra soother for sore teeth and gums
- Reward all good chewing choices
- Do not allow your pup to chew old shoes/slippers, this can lead to confusion for them
- Swap and behave in a calm, neutral manner to the undesirable chewing choices (they don't know what is valuable or sentimental. They are just curious like children)

If the chewing is excessive and these tips do not work, then seek veterinary advice in case there is a medical issue.

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