

Why is My Dog Destroying My House?

How to put a stop to your dog's digging, chewing, and general destruction

Dogs love to dig and chew and tear things up. It's all fun and games until they dig up your flowers, chew munch on your favorite shoes, or tear up your couch in a cloud of stuffing. So what can you do when your pooch's

Every dog person will one day have to contend with a canine buddy damaging something he or she shouldn't have. Usually, it's pretty easy to prevent and curb such behavior. Here are some simple strategies.

Why is my dog on a search-and-destroy mission?

Generally, there are two explanations for your dog's destructive behaviors:

1. It's typical puppy behavior. Puppies chew no matter what.

You probably can't avoid the fact that every puppy chews. Just like people, when those baby teeth are falling out and grown up teeth are coming in, it hurts! Chewing bones or your favorite chair makes your dog feel better.

The key to managing this behavior is to give your puppy good choices to chew on: toys that are meant just for his sore gums. Your veterinarian will have recommendations, as will your local pet store. When selecting any toy, make sure it's the right size (can't be swallowed) and won't break off into small and potentially dangerous pieces.

2. Your dog is bored, stressed, or anxious.

As with little kids, dogs have a hard time knowing how to direct boredom, pent up energy, or stress. Often they resort to some sort of compulsive or obsessive behavior like chewing or digging. These behaviors act as a relief valve for pent up stress and anxiety they're feeling.

If you think your dog might be bored or lacking in a particular sort of stimulation (physical or mental), get creative and give him or her some work to do. For more ideas about this, see our article on [how to constructively occupy your dog's time.](#)

Lots of factors, such as very subtle changes in a dog's routine, can cause a dog to feel anxious. Examples include the introduction of new pets or people into the house, a change in your dog's or your schedule, a new piece of furniture or rearranged room, or even a change in your cleaning products or cologne. Think about any changes that might have occurred and give your dog options to channel energy until he or she calms down and adjusts to changes in your household.

In the case of digging, we recommend having a water sprayer handy. When you catch your pup in the act, say "no" firmly and then spray him or her with water. This is often enough, if done a few times, to make your dog think twice about digging.

Sometimes these behaviors can be caused by being overtired or overstimulated. If your dog has been busy all day, but still seems intent on digging or chewing, he or she might just need a timeout or nap in his crate or quiet area. Think about the little boy or girl who plays all day and then still has energy to do things they shouldn't – usually, they just need some sleep.

But my dog just won't stop...

Sometimes you're going to need some help to curb your dog's destruction. Give your veterinarian a call to learn additional strategies and ideas. It may even be recommended that you spend time with a professional trainer. In the case of an extremely anxious dog, your vet might even prescribe medication to relieve some of your dog's stress.

Remember: the most important thing is to stay calm, be patient, and show your pooch lots of love.

If you have any questions or concerns, you should always visit or call your veterinarian – they are your best resource to ensure the health and well-being of your pets.