



Chewing

Chewing is a natural behavior for dogs, and we **cannot** and (*should* not) attempt to eliminate (or punish) it, as this will only cause confusion, anxiety, and likely resentment. However, we can teach dogs what **is** appropriate to chew and what **isn't**, and given the proper outlet, chewing can be an excellent source of enrichment, mental stimulation, and stress relief. Be sure to have plenty of appropriate chew toys that can help keep them occupied and be enriching for them throughout the day.

Toys like stuffed animals and vinyl squeaky toys, while fun and pretty cute, are not good toys to have for dogs who like to chew. The materials they are made of (even the "indestructible" or "fire hose" stuffed toys) are too soft and flimsy to hold up to a dog chewing on or tearing them up, and they will typically only last a few mins. You can still get these toys for your dog as a "once in a while treat" for them to be able to have and tear apart, which is also pretty fun for dogs to do. I'd also recommend raiding the clearance bin at a pet store for these toys, so your dog's 5 minutes of fun doesn't end up costing \$15+.

Luckily, there are several good chew options for dogs, in the form of both toys and treats, which can be easily obtained through local pet stores or online. Recommended treats and toy companies are listed below in no particular order. With toys, look for ones that are made from a hard rubber material. It will likely take some trial and error to find which treats and toys your dog likes and what their chewing strength is. Where applicable, be sure to check that company's sizing chart to determine which size is best for your dog. If in doubt, or if your dog falls on the cusp or in between sizes, choose larger for them to help avoid choking hazards. All treats should be thrown away when pieces become too small. Please also be on the lookout for treats/toys that recommend that they should only be used when a pet owner is present.

Treats:

- CET chews
- Bully sticks
- Antlers
- Pig ears
- Cow ears
- Beef trachea (Pro Tip: leave in an uncovered container or with the bag open for several days to make them a stronger chew)
- Himalayan Pet Supply is a company that also makes a lot of very good chew treats

Toys:

- Kongs (Different colors mean different chewing levels. Pink and blue are for puppies, purple is for senior dogs, red is for average adult dogs, black is for power chewers and made of the strongest material.) - They can be stuffed with food and frozen to increase interest too!

- Starmark Everlasting Treats (Probably the most expensive option but the toys are *very* tough, durable, and worth the extra expense.)
- Nylabone
- Bullymake

You can also think outside the box a little and find fun toys at a sporting goods store. Lacrosse balls make great chew toys, and hockey pucks can also be a satisfying chew. Baseballs and softballs are surprisingly soft and stand no chance against a dog's teeth, so those should be avoided (they also make a huge mess).

Tips for Preventing Inappropriate Chewing:

- First of all, excessive chewing often means a bored dog. Try adding another walk or play session into his schedule, or even better, an enrichment toy such as a filled, frozen Kong or puzzle feeder.
- A common reason that dogs chew on inappropriate objects is because they are often chased or yelled at when they do—which is a great game for them! If your dog picks up something inappropriate to chew (unless it is truly dangerous or harmful to them), **ignore** them, and when they choose to drop the object or walk away from it, reward them **immediately** by playing with an **appropriate** toy.
- Restrict access to commonly chewed objects whenever possible (close doors, put up baby gates, and keep those shoes off the floor!) but keep chew toys readily available. Keep your dog in a crate when you're not home, with the toy that you **DO** want him to chew on so that he will learn what is appropriate to chew.
- If your dog is not interested in chew toys, find a durable toy that holds treats (like a Kong). Put a few treats in it, top it off with peanut butter, cream cheese, wet food, or whatever your dog prefers, and freeze it to make it entertaining even longer.
- Some dogs may be deterred from chewing on certain items that have been sprayed with a bitter flavor spray, such as bitter apple. If this **does** work and the dog avoids the object, or picks it up and then spits it out, **immediately** praise and give them a treat. Then, remember to redirect them to a toy that they CAN chew on.
- **Reward alternate, incompatible behaviors:** Give your dog lots of praise and treats when they choose to chew on a chew toy **rather** than something inappropriate! **Every time you reward good behavior you make it more likely to occur in the future!**