



## WHY DOGS CHEW

### The Importance of Chewing

Chewing is a natural instinct for all canids, whether it's the wolf outside or the dog in your living room. The natural instinct to chew is often higher in puppies than adult dogs. Whatever the age of your dog, it's a natural behaviour that should be appropriately channelled rather than punished or discouraged.



### Stress Relief

The act of chewing raises levels of beneficial chemicals in the brain and body which has the effect of reducing stress. Often anxious and/or active dogs benefit from having a job to do, a purpose. The more the brain can be engaged in learning and carrying out new behaviours the more satisfied and relaxed the dog will be. This also improves self-esteem hugely in nervous dogs.

Providing appropriate chew toys (in addition to adequate exercise) can help lessen anxiety and give your dog something on which to focus their attention. Scented toys provide added stimulation, as do toys that incorporate treats or chews. If your dog is a shredder, make sure that they don't eat up whatever it is they shred, but the act of shredding is linked to instinctive urges to tear up food before eating it. Many domestic dogs stop short of eating what they have shredded, but some do, so pay attention.

### Burns Excess Energy

While going for a long walk, throwing a ball around, or taking your dog for a jog around the neighbourhood is ideal to shave off layers of energy, chewing is still working muscles.

Particularly when the weather isn't nice enough to go outside, a good chew session and mental muscle flex are great ways to wear out an active pup and calm an overactive mind. As we all know, a tired dog is a happy dog!

### Helps Puppies Explore the World

Puppies learn from everything you do—and don't—let them do. Introducing them to appropriate chewing outlets gives them a safe way to begin to explore the world through their mouth.

Those tiny needle teeth need something to get them through the teething process more effectively than nipping your bare skin. Teaching a positive association with chew toys vs, say, your TV cords and couch corners, will go a long way as they continue to grow.

### Indicates Potential Health Issues

If your dog enjoys chewing and then suddenly, or over time, loses interest in the activity, it may indicate a potential dental issue. Dogs don't always tell us if they're uncomfortable or in pain, but we can learn to identify when something is wrong based on deviations from normal behaviour.



Each dog varies in how much they chew and how heavy of chewers they are, but most people will see their dog gnawing on something at least every so often. Although chewing can become destructive if not managed well, it's important to let our dogs chew on things when they need to. Provided we supply safe and appropriate items for them to chew on, the behaviour itself is very beneficial. In fact, dogs should often be encouraged to chew.



### Mental Stimulation

Dogs need mental exercise as much, if not more, than they need physical exercise. Chewing is a great way to keep your dog's body and mind occupied. Treats and chew toys are very exciting and the act of chewing itself takes a lot of concentration and brain power. It's better to have your dog work hard on a toy or bone than it is

your dining table legs or shoes

### What to Chew?

Chewing is highly beneficial to puppies and dogs of all ages. It allows them to exercise their natural instincts, provides them proper mental stimulation and keep their mouths clean and healthy. The types of chews you buy will depend on your dog's specific requirements, such as his size, age and chewing habits. A small dog or puppy that chews lightly won't need something as strong and hard as an adult that chews very heavily. Chewing is a natural behaviour that needs to be accepted by all dog owners. It relieves boredom and destructive behaviour and even helps nervous dogs cope with separation anxiety.

Offer your dog some edible things to chew, like bully sticks, pig ears, rawhide bones, pig skin rolls or other natural chews. Be aware that dogs can sometimes choke on edible chews, especially if they bite off and swallow large hunks, so keep an eye on them. If in doubt ask at your local Pet Shop.



**Kong chew toys are fairly indestructable**

