Destructive Dogs

The most common complaint with young and newly adopted dogs is destructive behavior. Destructive behavior is usually an easy problem to solve because it is directly related to supervision.

There are many reasons a dog may destroy your belongings.

For fun!
Puppies may destroy things by simply wishing to explore their environment and play with what they find in it. Young dogs that are left unsupervised are bound to do some exploring. If they find anything that smells good, tastes good or feels good they will play with it. And by “play with it” we mean chase it, chew it to bits, and eat it! If no one is nearby with a better offer, then problem behavior develops.

To get at something beyond his reach.
Another cause for destructive behavior is a desire to reach something outside the house, room, fence, or wherever the dog is confined. If the destructive behavior is centered on doorways, windows or fences, your dog may have a problem with territorial aggression and may be reacting to a trespasser such as the mail carrier or a neighbor’s cat.

To get your attention.
Destructive behavior can also be attention-seeking behavior. If running around with your shoes causes you to drop whatever you are doing to chase the dog, then your dog is using the destructive behavior to get your attention.

If your dog is bored or unhappy left alone in a room, he can be taught to accept the restriction gradually with the help of tools like the Manners Minder, a Kong dispenser and increased attention and exercise from you when you are available.
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Because he is truly worried about being left alone.
Even with plenty of exercise, attention, and appropriate diversions (such as toys or Kongs), some dogs panic when left alone. These dogs are not destructive when supervised and are house trained. But when left alone, for just 30 minutes, they wreak havoc in the house. These dogs can be suffering from Separation Anxiety. This is a specific form of destruction related to insecurity, which can be handled with training and managing anxiety.

Here are some tips for dealing with destructive behavior:

» All dogs, but especially those who are described as “destructive,” will benefit greatly from a vigorous exercise program. Be sure your dog is getting enough exercise on a daily basis either through walks, runs, “chuck it” sessions, or by going to the dog park or to doggie day care.

» Consistently rewarding desirable behavior with positive attention is just as important as exercise in deterring destructive tendencies. Actively reward a dog with attention for playing quietly every chance you get.

» Destructive dogs may also benefit from a program to teach him about leadership so that he understands that all things in the house belong to you.

» When a dog is with you, be sure to consistently offer him an alternative when he picks up your belongings, and be sure to reward him handsomely (by playing with him) for choosing to play with his own toys.

» When your dog is not with you, make sure he is confined in a puppy proof area of your home or yard. If you are gone for long periods of time you may have difficulty confining the dog adequately while still providing sufficient exercise and enrichment. Consider having a dog walker come during the day or installing a dog run or enrolling your dog in day care at a kennel that can provide a stimulating environment for a growing dog.