

How to Stop Your Dog From Mouthing and Chewing

Most dogs up to one year of age need to chew, in order to promote proper teething and to help their permanent teeth to set properly in the jaw. Safe chew toys should therefore be provided to facilitate this. Your hand is not an appropriate chew toy, however; any puppy or adult dog that is allowed to mouth you is being disrespectful, and is also learning that it can control you and others through the use of its mouth. Additionally, you do not want your dog to chew to shreds your new pair of leather loafers, right? Here are some methods that you can try to discourage your dog from mouthing you, or chewing on the wrong item.

Method One: *Startling the dog*

Whenever your dog mouths you, let out a loud yell, as if you were in pain. It should be sudden enough to really startle the dog. Then, offer your dog the open palm of your hand, encouraging it to lick rather than mouth. If it does lick you, praise it. While still in the litter, pups learn to control mouthing amongst themselves by this very method; they learn that, if they chew on one of their littermates too forcibly, it causes them to yelp. Try this method for a few weeks and see if it works.

Method Two: *Using a spray bottle*

Fill a plant sprayer bottle with water and adjust it to emit a tight stream. Whenever the dog mouths you, spray it right in the mouth and nose while simultaneously saying "NO BITE". Do this consistently; the dog will eventually learn not to mouth you.

Destructive Chewing

Nothing is more upsetting than coming home to find a good pair of shoes chewed to ribbons by your dog. There are steps that you can take to minimize the chances of this happening, however.

1. First, dog-proof your home by picking up all vulnerable items such as shoes, belts, TV or VCR remotes, or anything else that is valuable to you. You wouldn't leave things lying around if an infant were present, so why do so with a dog, which has the reasoning capacity of a two year-old child?
2. Provide your dog with several chew toys of his own, and encourage it to chew on these. Nylon or rubber bones are preferable to rawhide or leather-type toys, simply because they are less similar to your own leather items; giving Fido leather products to chew on will encourage him to think that chewing on shoes and belts is also okay.
3. Do not allow a puppy to have access to the entire home when you are gone; this is an open invitation to disaster. A puppy is naturally curious, and will explore the home until it finds something good to chew, usually a treasured possession of yours. Keep a puppy in one room that has been "puppy-proofed", and provide it with several chew toys to pass the time.
4. If your dog likes to chew on furniture or wooden moldings, go to your nearest pet shop and purchase an anti-chewing spray or paste, which can be applied to anything you wish the dog to leave alone. These sprays or pastes are made to have a very bitter taste, something dogs hate. If these do not deter your dog, try using Tobasco sauce, or even rum.

Whatever methods you choose, be sure to use them consistently for at least six weeks, as that is how long it takes to effectively modify a bad behavior.