

DESTRUCTIVE BEHAVIOR

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Find additional resources at
pasadenahumane.org/behavior.

There are a couple of different reasons why your dog may be destructive. It could be just to play, or it could be a symptom of anxiety.

By following these guidelines, you can help your new dog acclimate to their home and learn better behavior.

Play Destruction

If your dog is destroying household items both when you are at home and when the dog is alone, they are probably just having fun or trying to entertain themselves because they are bored. This is the most common reason for destructive behavior in young dogs. To help curb your dog's playful destruction, provide the following:

- **Exercise.** Tired dogs are good dogs! Try to supply enough exercise to get your dog tired. Every dog is different. Watch your dog for what activity level seems to satisfy their exercise needs and keep them healthy. Make sure you get an OK from your veterinarian. Easy and effective ways to exercise are brisk walks or jogs, playing fetch, and arranging playgroups with other dogs.
- **Play and training exercises.** The mental stimulation and exercise that play and obedience provides will not only help with your dog's adjustment but will also help to improve your bond with your dog. Fetch, chase games (where your dog chases you), hide and seek, sits, downs, and stays are fun games.
- **Long-lasting chew toys.** Most dogs have an inherent need to chew. Safe and interesting toys are Knucklebones, bully sticks, and Kong toys filled with cheese spread, peanut butter, or treats. All of these are available at pet supply stores. Try to avoid giving your dog your shoes or clothes to chew on.
- **Dog-proofing.** Keep things out of your dog's reach (put your shoes in your closet). When you are not home, confine your dog to a safe place, such as a "boring" room, crate, or exercise pen.
- **Supervision.** If you see your dog start to chew on the wrong thing, offer an appropriate toy to trade. Try to remember that to an untrained dog, all things are chewable. Be patient as your dog learns right from wrong in the human world.

Remember, a destructive dog is probably very smart and wants to learn! Getting your dog involved in obedience classes, dog daycare, or other activities is a great way to keep your dog happy at home.

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Anxiety

Sometimes a dog may be destructive because they are experiencing some form of anxiety. Keep an eye on your surroundings and see if you can identify if your dog experiences anxiety from certain things, as this may be triggering their destructive behavior. Anxious behavior may look like lip-licking, tucking their tail, pacing around the room, avoidant behavior, or whining. Some common sources of anxiety are:

- **Separation Anxiety:** Dogs with separation anxiety are only destructive when left alone. These dogs may also cry and urinate or defecate in the house when alone. The destructive behavior tends to be centered around doors, windows and other exits. They will chew doorways and windowsills or pull up carpeting by the front door. Many dogs display signs of separation anxiety shortly after arriving in their new home. Keep in mind that crate training will not help the dog experience less anxiety and does not address this form of destructive behavior.
- **Fear of Noises:** Some dogs are so afraid of loud noises like thunder or fireworks that they destroy things to get to safety. These dogs only destroy things when there are loud noises. If you suspect your dog's destruction is happening when they are afraid, try camouflaging the noises using a fan or air conditioner. You can also try to give your dog a readily accessible, safe place that is protected from the noises (bathroom, basement, crate padded with blankets). If these techniques fail, see your veterinarian to discuss anti-anxiety drug therapy.

We are always here to help! You can find additional behavior and training resources at pasadenahumane.org/behavior.

Adapted from Northeast Animal Shelter

