



How to handle puppy chewing.

by Carol Scott

To say that an eight-week old puppy is chewing destructively is really a misnomer. A puppy that age does not intentionally do destructive things. About eight-weeks of age, his little pin like teeth are coming in, and, like his human teething counterpart, the puppy needs to chew. A mother will purchase a teething ring for a new baby. Good pet supply shelves are loaded with puppy teething rings.

Hard rubber chew toys, milk bone type biscuits, and rawhide chews make excellent teethers for the puppy. The point is: if you don't provide your puppy with the necessary thing – chew toys - your puppy will provide his own. These will usually be in the form of an Italian shoe, a sofa cushion, or the legs of your favorite cocktail table.

Occasionally, even when adequate chew-toys have been provided, the curious puppy will eat something that seems just a bit better. . . like your purse sitting in the chair. Even if you feel that your puppy can't do much damage to whatever it is he is chewing, it doesn't belong to him, remove the item – or remove the puppy from the item. Immediately replace that item with a chew toy that belongs to the puppy.

His eight-week old teeth may not do much damage to your slippers, but his six-month old canine choppers will make short work of them later. It's better to prevent bad habits from developing than to try to rectify those bad habits later.

Because a puppy's mind at an early age is like a blank chalkboard, it's simple to write on that chalkboard and make it stick. Take the shoe, purse, or other item from the puppy's mouth, accompanied with a firm "NO"! Replace the item with one of his toys followed by a bit of praise. Don't take something away from the puppy without replacing it with something of his. To snatch something from your puppy, followed by a scolding, simply confuses his

mind. To your puppy you'd be "just a big old meany!" No learning whatsoever would take place. Substituting an item of his own will cause learning to take place in just a short period of time. The puppy will view his own toys as chewable items.

Supervision is just as important in puppy chewing as it is in proper house training. You must remember that a puppy's approach to the world outside the box he was born in is really quite simply: eat it! It's up to you to show your puppy the forbidden fruits.

If you take the time to show your puppy right from wrong, teach him what is his and what is not, and shower him with attention and affection (sprinkled with gentle discipline), you will have succeeded in building a foundation based upon respect: that is, your puppy's respect for you. From that respect will come love, and, eventually, as your puppy grows bigger, a desire to please. That desire to please you is the vehicle that will make your puppy's obedience training a complete success.