

## **TRAINING TIPS FOR CHEWING PUPPIES**

Every family that has taken a dog into their home has suffered the destructiveness of needle-sharp teeth that demolish dolls and seat cushions, splinter furniture and door frames, and tear bedspreads and panty hose. That such a tiny bundle of fur could be responsible for such waste is beyond belief.

**Puppies chew to ease teething discomfort**, to play, to explore the environment, to lessen hunger, to establish dominance, and to relieve boredom. Families can plan a response to active puppy teeth that will soften the impact on possessions and limbs while the pup is growing.

### **Some suggestions:**

**Buy Blackjack several toys he can chew on.** Hard rubber balls and Kongs, sterilized bones, nylon bones, and knotted ropes are available at pet supply stores. Knotted rags and old socks and shoes are acceptable as long as the pup doesn't get confused between the discarded item and a pair of \$100 Nikes or Katy's new t-shirt. Soft squeak toys are fun for small puppies and for games of fetch, but make sure they are sturdy enough for chewing exercises for older pups.

**Whenever Taffy chews the wrong thing**, remove her to a neutral area and give her something she's allowed to chew. No shouting, no smacks with a newspaper or hand -- just matter-of-fact corrections in a firm tone of voice. "No, that's mine, here's something for you" is appropriate.

**Confine Fritz to a crate** when you cannot watch him. A confined pet cannot chew the furniture. Make sure he has a toy in the crate that he is allowed to chew.

Limit access to bedrooms, living rooms, etc. with baby gates and closed doors.

**Teach "no bite"** to eliminate attempts to chew parts of human bodies. Puppies should never be allowed to teethe on people parts. Never. Biting family members is an attempt to establish dominance. Even toy dogs try to become leader of the family pack if given the opportunity. When a fast-growing guardian breed is allowed or encouraged to mouth arms and legs, he will quickly become unruly.

**If you cannot stop the pooch from biting** on crawling babies and toddlers, separate kids and dog. Don't fall for the old "he really doesn't mean it" when Ranger nips or growls at the kids. It doesn't matter what he meant -- he's not allowed to put his teeth on babies. Ever.

**Puppies that are allowed to rule the roost with teeth and growl will turn into dogs that do the same.**

Join in a game of retrieve or Frisbee. Be sure to teach "come" and "drop it" so you don't end up chasing Duke through several counties to get the ball back. These commands come in handy when the pup steals Mary's slippers or snatches an ornament off the Christmas tree as well.

Each time you give the pup a toy or treat, say "take it" before he puts it in his mouth. Grabbing is not allowed. When Bandit has mastered "sit," he should do so before the toy or food is offered.

Put Daisy on a leash to teach the retrieve game so you can guide her back and get the ball. Grasp the ball firmly with one hand, open her mouth by placing the other hand over her muzzle and pushing in on her lips to protect your fingers from her teeth. Say "drop it" and open her mouth to remove the toy. Praise her for completing the task.

**Don't be intimidated by puppy growling** and don't overreact. As Daisy learns the appropriate responses, the growling will cease.

**Never play tug-of-war with a pup** no matter how cute this growling ball of fluff looks on the other end of a rope or stick. **If you give up the game, Rambo wins** and advances up the leadership ladder. If you pull the rope from his teeth, you may hurt his tender young mouth. Puppies that learn to play tug-of-war, frequently look at any moving piece of clothing as fair game, even if there's a child inside.

**Teach children that puppies must never be encouraged to chase or bite.** Heelers, Australian Shepherds and other herding breeds may try to round up children by nipping at their heels, but this, too, is unacceptable. Owners can understand that their herding breed pups may exhibit this behavior, but they should not allow it to continue.

Use **discipline, not punishment** for infractions of the rules. A stern "no" and banishment to a crate should handle most infractions. Puppies should never be hit.

**Be persistent and consistent.** If it was wrong yesterday, it's wrong today.

*The millions of dogs destroyed at animal shelters are testimony to the myth that good relationships with dogs develop automatically. You can avoid many of the behavior problems that often result in abandonment if by doing some basic training to teach Rover to inhibit his bite reflex.*