



CENTER FOR
Shelter Dogs

A PROGRAM OF THE ANIMAL RESCUE LEAGUE OF BOSTON

DESTRUCTION OF HOUSEHOLD ITEMS

We suspect that your dog may be destructive after joining your home. Dogs destroy things for different reasons. By following these guidelines your dog's adjustment will be faster and easier.

- **Puppy play destruction:** You know your dog's destruction is out of fun when he or she destroys things both when you are home and when you are not home and when the things your dog destroys look like fun (ripping up pillows, chewing your favorite shoes). This is the most common reason for destruction in young dogs. To help try
 - **EXERCISE** "Tired dogs are good dogs". Try to supply enough exercise to get your dog tired. Every dog is different so watch your dog carefully and 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 OBEDIENCE 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 make you a leader and a better best friend. Fetch, chase games (where your dog chases you), hide and seek, sits, downs and stays are fun games.
 - **GIVE INTERESTING AND 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 and treats and pressed rawhides. All of these are available at pet supply stores. Try not to give your dog your shoes or clothes to chew on.
 - **"PUPPY OR DOG PROOF"** 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.
 - **SUPERVISE YOUR DOG WHENEVER YOU ARE HOME** If you see your dog start to chew on the "wrong" thing, say no, and gently exchange for a "right" thing. Try to remember that to an untrained dog, all things are chewable. Be patient as your dog learns right from wrong in a human world.
 - **PUT BAD TASTING PRODUCTS ON THINGS YOU DON'T WANT CHEWED** Bitter-tasting sprays and ointments are available at pet supply stores. These are safe and deter most dogs from chewing. But because they don't last, they may have to be refreshed every day.

- **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. Dogs with separation anxiety mainly destroy things to try to get to be with you. 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 homes. Most get over it. Here are some things you can do to help your dog adjust sooner.
 - **PRACTICE SHORT DEPARTURES** On our dog's first day in your home start to leave the house for very short times. It's very important to pay no attention to your dog when you do the departures. First just go in and out the door. If your dog doesn't panic, take the trash outside or pick up your mail. Then, leave the house for 5-minute intervals. Then try 10 minutes. If you take your car to work, make sure you drive your car away. Over the first two days, try to progress up to 30 minutes. Make sure you allow your dog to relax between departures. If your dog panics **SLOW DOWN!** Wait a couple of hours before doing another departure and make it short. The goal is to have your dog relax when left alone. If you are patient and don't go faster than your dog can tolerate both of you will be happier.
 - **IGNORE YOUR DOG WHEN YOU COME AND GO** Making too big a deal of your departures will teach your dog to make a big deal of departures. Ignore your dog when leaving and don't have a party when you come back.
 - **DON'T LET YOUR DOG BE A VELCRO DOG** Discourage allowing your dog to follow you everywhere. Staying in another room will help your dog learn that being alone is not dangerous. Don't allow your dog to sit next to you all the time. Resting and sleeping while not touching you will help your dog feel more confident when alone.
 - **GIVE YOUR DOG A DELICIOUS AND LONG-LASTING CHEW BEFORE YOU LEAVE** Although many anxious dogs won't eat when left alone, some will and when they do, their anxiety is reduced. Leaving a very delicious chew may be something a dog just can't refuse! Try a Kong toy or hollow marrowbone filled with either cheese spread or peanut butter and treats. Only give this toy before you leave. Pick it up when you come home.
 - **NOTHING IN LIFE IS FREE** This is a program to teach your dog to politely ask for things before they are given. This is an easy way to become your dog's gentle leader and to decrease your dog's "Velcro" tendencies. All you do is to ask your dog to sit before you do anything for your dog. For instance: sit before being pet, sit before being greeted, sit before putting a leash on, sit before opening the door, sit before putting the food bowl down, sit before giving a treat, sit before throwing a ball, sit before getting in the car. Feel free to add things if you'd like.
- **Fear of noises** Some dogs are so afraid of loud noises like thunder or fireworks they destroy things to get to safety. These dogs only destroy when there are loud noises. If you suspect your dog's destruction is happening when afraid, try to camouflage 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).