One beautiful sunny day several years ago, I went out for a drive. When I returned home I found that my cute, adorable, adolescent dog chewed my brand new oak arms of my futon. Whose fault was it? It was mine. My mistake was I should have kept him (young adolescent) crated when he was unsupervised.

So the question is, “why do dogs chew”? Puppies, like infants and toddlers, explore their world by putting objects in their mouths. Also, they are going through a teething period for about 6 months. Excessive chewing behavior seems to subside around 18 months of age but will continue to some degree, depending on the dog, for his whole life. Adult dogs may also engage in destructive chewing for a variety of reasons. He could be bored; suffer from separation anxiety; fear related; wants attention; or as a puppy wasn’t taught what was appropriate to chew or not to chew.

To help manage the situation of chewing, here are some suggestions…

1. Supervise your dog. When you first bring a dog/puppy home keep him on a leash so he will always be in your sight. If you are unable to keep an eye on him it would be best to keep him in a safe place that’s dog proofed such as a gated room or crate (if trained).
2. In a dog’s mind, if something is within reach it can be something for them to chew…i.e remote, cell phone, books, eyeglasses etc. With our smell on it makes it more irresistible.
3. Give your dog plenty of mental and physical activity. If you’re dog is bored he will find things to amuse himself and it probably will be something you won’t like. Give your dog plenty of play time. There are also dog puzzles to help with mental stimulation
4. Train your dog “Leave it” so when he may be interested in picking something up in his mouth he will know to not get it when you say that cue.
5. Train your dog to “Give” or “Drop” to release whatever is in his mouth. When you see your dog with something in his mouth that he shouldn’t have, get a real yummy treat and show him you have it and say the word “give”. Hopefully he will release the object and you then reward him with a treat. This will take some practice.
6. Make items taste terrible by using a spray that tastes very bitter, such as Bitter Apple. Most dogs don’t like the taste of this, but there are some that don’t mind it. This must be reapplied often to maintain its effectiveness.
7. Don’t chase your dog if he grabs an object and runs. Being chased by a person is fun and games. Instead make a unique sound which will probably get his attention then give him a treat saying the “Give” cue.

Most likely you will eventually find your dog chewing on something you don’t want him to. Your dog needs time to learn your house rules. The best way to keep your dog from chewing something that you don’t want him to be chewing is to keep it out of reach. Those tasty remotes should be left somewhere that your dog doesn’t have access to it.

It’s important never to punish your dog when you find a chewed item after the fact. Your dog won’t associate the punishment with what they did in the past, even if it was just minutes earlier. He just knows you’re mad at him and he feels threatened by your facial expression and tone in your voice so he may hide or give the “guilty” look. It will not correct the problem of him chewing. It actually may make matters worse and even provoke new undesirable behaviors.