



What Type of Toys Should I Buy For My Puppy? What About My Older Dog?

Canines like to chew and chase things for play. The challenge many owners face is trying to find appropriate toys for their pets. There are dozens of choices available commercially. The age and size of the dog should always be taken into account when choosing the right toy.

Chewing Toys:

Many young and some older dogs enjoy chewing on various items. The job of the owner is to provide appropriate items that will benefit and not harm their pet. Try to provide enough safe items so the pet is not searching out dangerous things (rugs, children's toys, your good shoes). If you purchase several of these items, do not leave them all out at once. Develop a rotation system so there is always something "new" available.

Rawhide items are usually safe if watched. A dog should not be chewing them so vigorously as to be swallowing large pieces.

Hard rubber toys (like the Kong) can provide hours of entertainment, especially if you can enhance their taste (by stuffing them with treats or coating the inside with garlic flavoring).

Soft plastic-type chewing toys must be very carefully monitored. Latex type toys are more durable and safer than less expensive vinyl. These items should be inspected daily for signs of wear and tear and discarded when they begin to break down.

Hard plastic-type bones are **not** recommended because the plastic material is tougher than the enamel on the teeth and fractured teeth may result.

Real bones are **not** recommended since pieces can quickly break off and can become lodged in the dog's intestinal tract.

Cartilage products (like pig's ears or feet) are very popular but can be problematic. A soft-mouthed dog may gnaw on this type of toy for days and never have any problem. Some more aggressive chewers may bite off chunks of these things and have resulting stomach troubles.

Cloth or fleece toys are probably only appropriate for chewing for smaller puppies and then they need to be monitored for signs of wear. Large pets can use these for chasing, etc.

Chasing or interactive toys:

Most dogs with retrieving backgrounds will play “fetch” for hours with simple items (like tennis balls). When choosing these toys, a variety is nice, but again, give the pet access to only a few at a time. A helpful command to teach the dog when playing in this fashion is a “drop” or “leave it”. This comes in very handy when he or she has something inappropriate in his or her mouth.

Balls come in a variety of sizes. Make sure they are a size and made of material appropriate for your pet.

Retrieving dummies work very well in most situations. They are comfortable in the pet's mouth and are easy to use. Even if you don't plan to hunt with your dog, these items can be useful toys.

Tug-of-war type items can be great fun in an adult-only household but their use is discouraged if pets are to be around children at all.

As a conclusion, make your choice for pet toys in a thoughtful planned fashion. If you are unsure about the appropriateness of an item for your individual pet, consult with knowledgeable professionals.

This information has been provided as a courtesy by Dr. Pam Ogden / Oakwood Hills Animal Hospital.