



Choosing a Safe Toy:

Browse the aisles of any pet shop or veterinary clinic and one thing is clear – there's no shortage of toys for your dog. So how do you know which toys will be best for your particular

dog or puppy? Here are a few tips to consider when deciding which toys are safe for your dog and which ones are not:

The size of your dog determines the size and type of toy. If the toy is a solid unit, it's okay if it's too big but very critical that it not be too small.

A toy should not be so small that a dog can swallow all or part of it. This means that any part of the toy that sticks out will have to be too large to bite off.

Don't give toys made of fabric to dogs that are prone to tearing things apart. Fabric, stuffing, and squeakers are all dangerous if ingested. Even if the material is not toxic, foreign substances can cause intestinal blockage. This is also true for toys that are made of string, like rope toys.

If the toy can be stuffed with treats, the openings should be small enough that your dog can't get his nose stuck inside. A dog will try to put his snout or lower jaw into these types of toys and can become injured doing so.

Chew toys such as rawhide or "digestible" toys can pose a choking or intestine blockage problem for some dogs. Toys made of real bones can splinter and puncture a dog's intestines if he's a heavy chewer. The safest toys are made from hard rubber and can be stuffed with treats. Very few dogs can bite off pieces of hard rubber toys and swallow them. Even if they do, the risk of a digestive problem is very low. Toys made from nylon are also safe, but softer ones may be chewed up easily, causing choking or intestinal blockage, so give your dog the hardest nylon toys available.

If your dog enjoys chasing toys, like flying discs or balls, the toy should be safe to catch at high speeds. This means that the toy is large enough that your dog can't swallow it or get it jammed in his throat during a catch. Make sure the edges can't injure your dog's mouth or tear his lips and gums. It should also be soft enough that it won't hurt your dog's teeth.

When to replace an old toy?

A dog can become especially fond of his toys that a special bone or ball may become worn and old-looking – wear and tear will require you to replace the toy. Here are some toy replacement tips:

If the toy is made of fabric, wash it gently by hand or machine-wash it with scent-free detergent to keep it looking new. If your dog likes to take his toys outside, it may be necessary to replace them frequently. Fabric toys need to be replaced when they become ripped and/or very soiled. Keep in mind that fabric toys absorb a dog's saliva, which can promote the growth of bacteria, so wash the toy frequently.

Nylon bones should be replaced as soon as they become small enough for your dog to fit the whole bone into his mouth or if the dog is able to chew off large pieces.

Hard rubber toys generally last a long time, but even these can become worn and should be replaced when pieces are chewed off of the edges.

Let your dog play with only one or two toys at a time. Take old toys away each week and replace them with different ones. This will keep your dog interested in all his toys. The toys taken away can be cleaned, stored, and rotated back into your pup's playtime.

Each dog is different and has different needs, so experiment with various toys to see what your dog enjoys the most.

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