



Interactive Dog Toys

When you cannot be around to play with your dog, give them a fun mentally stimulating toy to occupy their time. Bones and rawhides can be enjoyable for dogs but they usually aren't interesting enough to keep the dog engaged for a long period of time. Dogs are more likely to focus on a toy that makes noise or release small amounts of food. Bored dogs will find other more destructive ways to entertain themselves. Use a combination of toys to keep the dog busy for hours.

Kong Toys and Squirrel Dudes: These are hard rubber toys that can be stuffed to keep your dog busy when you can't play with them. You can fill a Kong or Squirrel with just about any food that is safe for dogs. Keep your dog busy when you head off to work by filling the toy the night before with their kibble and fill the top with natural peanut butter and freeze it. This will help ease the anxiety of you leaving them alone. This is a great tool for crate training.

Treat Ball, Buster Cube and Twist n' Treat: These toys drop food as the dog knocks it around. This is a great toy for alone training. They come in different sizes and shapes, suitable for most breeds. Most of these toys can be used indoors or outside.

Puzzle Toys: Toys such as the I Qube, Intellibone and Hide-a-Squirrel are plush puzzle toys for your dog to take apart and put back together. Many of these toys have squeakers to keep the dog engaged. You and your dog will get hours of enjoyment out of these.

Balls: Many breeds are natural retrievers and love nothing more than following after a colorful ball in the backyard. Retrieving can be a fun game for you and your dog. Be cautious when deciding what type of ball to give to your dog. Many tennis balls have a chemical coating on them that is toxic to dogs. Also, tennis balls can be very abrasive on the tooth enamel. Try to find a rubber ball that is not too hard or too big for your dog to fit in its mouth.

Frisbees: Dogs that enjoy retrieving or herding often like catching flying discs. Many discs that are specially made for dogs are still very hard and can injure their teeth. Repetitive stress on the dog's ligaments can cause pain or even lead to paralysis. Try to throw the disc low to keep the dog from doing too many acrobatics. One bad leap can lead to knee or back surgery. Choose a fabric or rope disc to save wear and tear on the teeth.

Tug Toys: If you choose to play tug of war with your dog, choose a toy that is specially designed for tug. Do not use a regular plush toy or a rope. These can tear and injure the dog. Check with a trainer about what type of toy to use. (See handout: "How to Play Tug of War").

Safety Precautions

- Check toys often for defects. Even the most indestructible toy can become weak.
- Make sure the toy is size and breed appropriate. Each dog has different jaw strength.
- Never force a dog to play with a toy. Not all dogs like all toys. Find something they do like.
- Dogs can choke on almost any material. Watch them closely when playing.