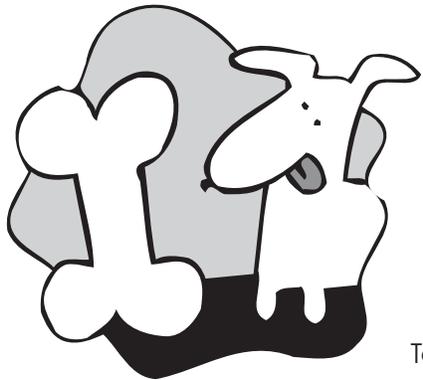


# How To Choose A Chew Toy



Dogs love to chew! Giving your dog appropriate things to chew on is good for their teeth and gums, keeps them occupied, and decreases the tendency to chew on things they shouldn't. But did you know that some chews you can buy for your pet are actually harmful? Unlike toys for children, there are no rules or regulations regarding toys or treats for pets. Just because you can buy an item in a store does not mean it's good for your pet! So what should you watch for and what should you avoid?

Toys with small parts that your dog could swallow or choke on are common. Avoid any toy for dogs or cats that has strings, googly eyes, feathers, or any other part that could come off.

Avoid items that are too hard. The most common items on which dogs break their teeth are cow hooves/chew hooves and ice cubes. Biting down just right on an object that is too hard causes a flake of the tooth to shear off. If the tooth breaks such that the tooth root is exposed, the tooth will be very painful and will subsequently become infected. Because this usually happens to the large back premolar that is difficult to see, your dog may be in pain for many months before you even know there is a problem. Do not give your dog chew hooves - period. It does not matter how big your dog is. If your dog likes ice cubes, switch to shaved ice instead.

Another popular item is the rawhide chew. Rawhides come in all different sizes and shapes and sometimes even in flavors. Unfortunately, many of them are preserved in formalin or formaldehyde, which are carcinogens and can also be toxic to the liver. Most of the rawhides that contain these toxic preservatives are from foreign countries. Their use is restricted in the U.S. so rawhides made here in the states are usually safe. Keep searching until you find the ones made here and don't buy any made in other countries. If your dog swallows large pieces of rawhide that could cause choking, switch to a smaller or larger form that prevents this. Do not give your dog rawhides if it gives him diarrhea or an upset stomach. Do not give rawhides unless you are there to keep an eye on him - choking on rawhides is common. The same guidelines also apply to pigs' ears, turkey feet and other preserved animal parts.

Beef bones are only safe if they are boiled and softened. Raw meat or bones are not safe for dogs or people. Not only can uncooked bones break teeth but they can also give your dog Salmonella, Toxoplasmosis, E. coli or other food poisoning. Chicken, turkey or other small bones can splinter and cause punctures in the mouth, esophagus or intestines, so these also should never be fed to pets.



Pieces of rope with a knot at each end are popular now. These are a good choice as they are soft and gentle on teeth and gums. Throw them away when they start to unravel. Soft plush toys usually don't last long, and if the stuffing is swallowed it can cause an intestinal blockage. Take these away as soon as they start to come apart, which in large dogs may be in a matter of minutes.

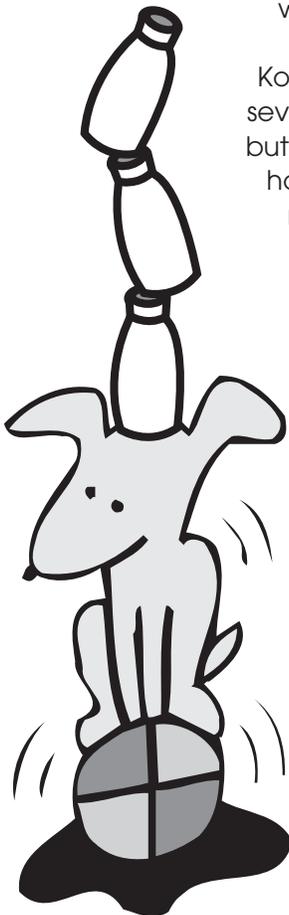
Nylabones<sup>®</sup>, Gumabones<sup>®</sup> and other nylon bones are also good, although some of these are hard enough to fracture teeth. Pick one on the softer side. If your puppy is teething, try placing a nylon toy in the freezer for a few hours. A chilled one helps numb the gums. Squeaky toys are also good as long as the squeaker can't come loose and be swallowed and there are no parts that can be any plastic or vinyl toys you choose are sturdy, heavy-weight and large enough that the pet can't choke on it. The same goes for balls. Balls should be larger than the dog can fit in the back of his mouth.



chewed off. Make sure

Tennis balls are great for playing fetch but the fuzz on the outside is very abrasive to the teeth. Dogs that carry tennis balls around all the time will wear the enamel off their teeth. Put them away when the game is over.

Kong toys are highly recommended. They are heavy-weight rubber come in several sizes, and have a hollow center into which you can stuff a little peanut butter, cream cheese, liver sausage or other food treat. Your dog will spend hours working at getting the food out with his tongue. A dog thus occupied is much less likely to be getting into trouble chewing on other things, especially if the Kong toy is brought out only as a special treat whenever you leave the house. There are other sturdy rubber toys available as well that are good. The ones we sell are made to be visible on an X-ray should your dog swallow a piece of it.



Old, well washed and rinsed plastic milk or soda bottles bottles make good chew toys. Frisbees are always popular and another good choice, especially for large dogs. Old socks and shoes are NOT good choices - your dog can't be expected to understand the difference between old shoes and your best shoes.

Whatever toys you choose, use common sense and look for tough, long-lasting and durable choices. If your dog likes what you've chosen, he'll be sure to put it to the test!

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2082 Cheyenne Court, Grafton, WI 53024 • phone: 262-375-0130 • fax: 262-375-4196 • [www.bestfriendsvet.com](http://www.bestfriendsvet.com)

