



The Benefits of Chew Toys and Puzzle toys

Adapted from Dr. Ian Dunbar

Your dog is a super inquisitive creature, especially if they are youngsters or have lived a limited past life in which they were not able to explore, investigate, or scavenge. With that being said, if you leave your dog alone with nothing to do, they will find things to do (unfavorable to humans), or worse, develop anxiety because they have nothing to focus on but being alone.

Your dog will chew whether you like it or not, so it is imperative that you give them things to constantly chew on, and if they learn to enjoy chewing on these designated items, your dog will learn the appropriate things to chew on and even look forward to settling down for some quality chew time as they get older and grow within your family.

To teach them the appropriate things to chew on, be sure to figure out what they love to put their mouths on. Some dogs love soft plushy toys, others like very hard to destroy items. Once you have figured out what they enjoy, you have figured out how to keep them busy.

Wild canines spend about 90% of their waking hours searching for something to eat. So feeding your dog out of a bowl essentially deprives him of one of his natural principal activities; scavenging for food. When you bring your pup/dog home, create an environment in which they have to find and work for their food. Eliminate food bowls and put their meals in a puzzle toy that they have to kick around, chew on, and nuzzle the food out of such as - Kongs, Biscuit Balls, Squirrel Dudes, hooves, antlers, sterilized marrow bones, etc. This activity is great for dogs that scarf their food – forcing them to slow down their eating, as well as it releases serotonin in their brain as they chew, calming them down while they eat.

When you notice your pup/dog putting her mouth on an item they should not chew, or when you leave your pup/dog alone; giving them a puzzle toy or chew toy to work on not only helps prevent household destruction, but it also teaches them what to chew on, helps eliminate recreational or boredom barking, and helps them to learn an alternative but still recreational activity that fills their time. This activity keeps your pup/dog occupied, which also helps keep separation anxiety at bay because their mind is focused on what they are doing, not you being gone. And again the serotonin released in their brain from this focused chewing, will relax them and even make them sleepy.

A chew toy should be hard to destroy and nothing that your dog ends up eating. For many dogs, plush toys are not an option as they end up tearing it apart and swallowing pieces of it. For your dog's safety, be sure to throw away chew toys that your dog has chewed down to a tiny nub or toys that they can tear up and swallow. Leaving these toys around can be a hefty vet bill or worse, death. Each dog is an individual. Where some dogs can make a bone last months, others will chew it up in one night.

One thing to keep in mind is your dog's weight and overall health. Overweight dogs most often live shorter lives due to many of the same health problems overweight humans have. To avoid an overweight dog, use their daily kibble in the chew toys as well as for treats, look for low calorie healthy treats to use as stuffing and/or training treats, and remember the treat size for a German Shepherd is the size of a pea, so no need to give them a whole biscuit for doing a sit.

Some chew toys you will not have to stuff, such as some bones or bully sticks, others however you will want to master the art of stuffing!

- Don't pack the puzzle or chew toy. You want the food to be accessible with some of it coming out easily, creating an instant reward for your pup/dog chewing on his chew toy. You also want some of the food to slowly come out, and some of it to not come out at all so they continue to work at it for quite a while.
- Smear a little honey around the inside of the toy, fill it up with kibble, and then block the hole (s) with dog biscuits.
- Wet your dogs kibble until it is slightly moist, mix a little dog food in it where the kibble has a slight coating, fill the toy with this mixture and freeze. We suggest keeping a few of these in the freezer so they are immediately ready for use. Also, if the toy is too frozen for your dog, put it in the microwave for 30 – 60 seconds to soften it up slightly.

Below you will find some great items to stuff puzzle or chew toys with:

Apples	Applesauce	Apricots	Baby Food
Bananas	Beef (cooked)	Beef Jerky	Bran Cereal
Bread	Broccoli (raw)	Carrots	Cashews
Cauliflower (raw)	Celery	Cheerios	Cheese
Cheese Whiz	Chicken Broth	Cream Cheese	Croutons (plain)
Dried Fruit	Eggs (cooked)	Honey	Liver (Freeze-dried)
Macaroni & Cheese	Nut Butter	Oatmeal	Orange Slices
Pasta (cooked)	Peanut Butter	Potatoes	Pumpkin (canned)
Tuna	Rice	Rice Cakes	Steak
Turkey	Velveeta	Wheat Germ	Sweet Potatoes