

# Dog Toys and How to Use Them

Thinking of getting that expensive toy for your dog to keep him happily engaged?

Hold on! Your dog may not actually need it... here's why!

By Tanya Kane



IMAGE COURTESY- SOLOVIOVA LIUDMYLA-SHUTTERSTOCK

Ever so often, I am told: "My dog has so many toys but he just does not want to play!"

So what's the story?

Dogs don't need fancy toys and fancy brands; even homemade DIY toys work just fine. What dogs *do* need, however, are suitable toys, introduced at suitable times and for suitable situations!

## What's more interesting to a dog?

1. A very interesting colourful ball that draws my immediate attention in the pet store and left by his bed.

OR

2. An old tennis ball from my kid's coaching class that I ensure to play a game of fetch with every time it comes out.

The answer is number 2. Simply because no matter how attractive a ball looks to us, the ball is of zero value to the dog if there is no one to play a game of fetch with!

Here are some suggestions when you are choosing toys for your dog!

## Different Toys, Different Jobs



1. **Toys Meant for Sharing:** These are typically toys where the dog needs a human to share the toy with. These toys help teach a dog how he can share his toys and make the game more entertaining. Playing 'Fetch' is a great example.

2. **Power Toys:** These are toys that are used to establish who is stronger. When you engage your dog in tug games, the outcome of the tug establishes who is stronger. While in a game this may sound like fun, it is extremely important that your dog does not get possessive and aggressive during these games. The game should be pleasant and the outcome should ensure you are able to win more often than your dog does.

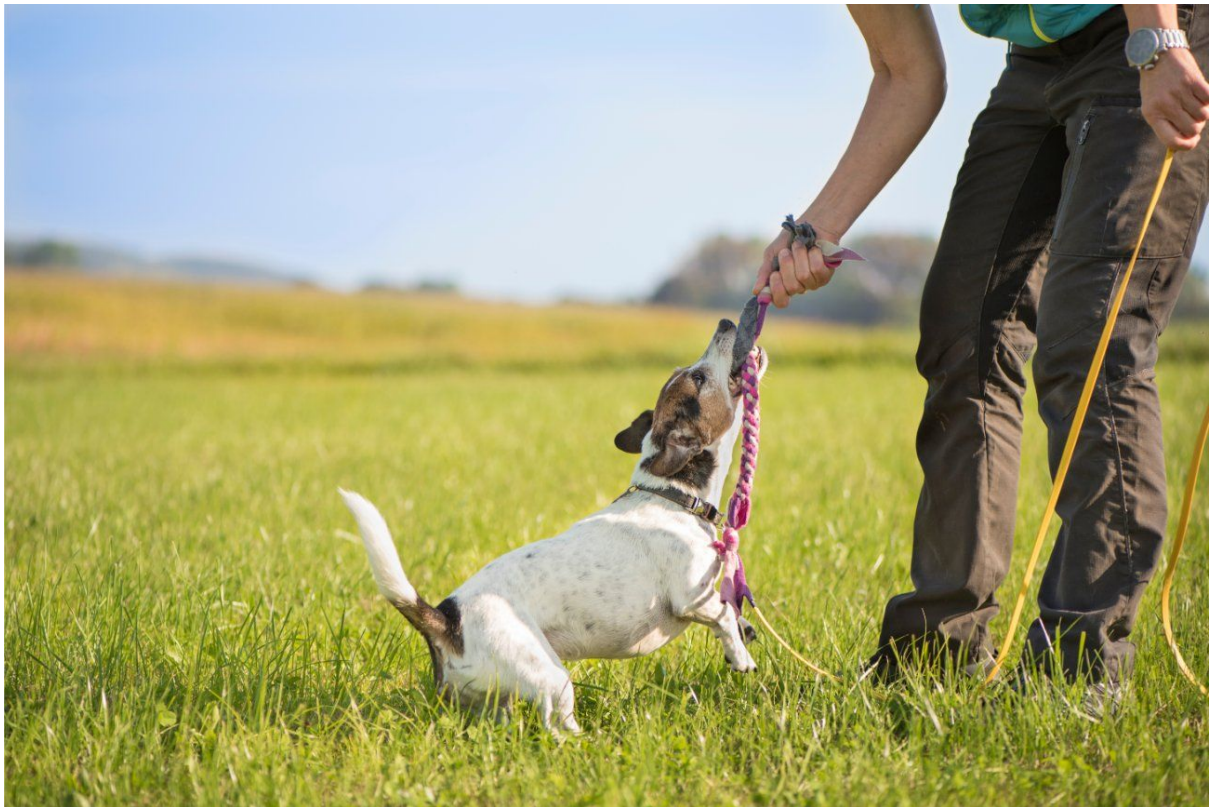


IMAGE COURTESY- THKA-SHUTTERSTOCK

Tug ropes are available in all sizes specific to your dogs' needs and most dogs enjoy a friendly game of tug.

3. **Isolation Toys:** These are toys that your dog can engage with even in your absence. Usually, these are self-rewarding toys that will dispense treats as they roll or reward the dog for interaction. These are very handy when you have to leave your dog by himself at home.



IMAGE COURTESY- GEORGE RUDY-SHUTTERSTOCK

4. **Especially for Puppies:** Puppies use their mouths like we would use our hands, which is why different textures are always a great idea. Puppies also go through two teething phases, so chewy toys and soothing toys (iced toys) that help them through this process are also things one can invest in to save your furniture, and sometimes, hands!

The most important factor about toys is ensuring that they are not just lying around all day. Toys strewn around the house will gradually lose their value and you will find that your dog is no longer interested in playing. Toys (barring isolation toys) should be brought out specifically during play times and put away into a cupboard until the next time. This will ensure that even an old toy will still be just as exciting two years on!