

Playing it safe

How to find the best toys for your dog or cat

When you walk into a pet supply store, it can be overwhelming. There are just too many options! How are you supposed to know what's best for your pet?

Some toys are great. They let you have fun with your pet, and help him express his natural behaviours. But other toys can be dangerous! Just because something looks cool or colourful, it doesn't mean it's good for your furry friend.

Read on to figure out how to find the perfect toy for your dog or cat. Remember, the best way to keep your buddy safe is to supervise him during playtime.

Pets can swallow pieces when toys fall apart, so pay attention if his toys are becoming worn. That's when it's time to throw them out and replace them!



Time to take this toy away!

FOR YOUR PLAYFUL PUP

For dogs, chewing is a natural behaviour. Toys can also help their teeth stay healthy by scraping away plaque and tartar.

Go for it!

- ✓ Classic Kong® toys, food puzzles and food-dispensing balls
- ✓ Veterinarian-recommended chew toys made of nylon or rubber
- ✓ Plush and squeaky toys
- ✓ Fetch toys such as rubber balls or Frisbees

Beware!

- ◆ Rawhide toys.
Some dogs try to gulp these down in chunks, which makes them a choking hazard.
- ◆ Hard plastic toys. These can chip your dog's teeth!
- ◆ Toys from the dollar store. They're cheap to buy, but also cheaply made! They usually fall apart right away.



***TIP:** A toy is too hard if you can't make an indentation in it with a fingernail, or if it would hurt to hit yourself in the knee with it.

Make a Pupsicle

Summer is here! It's the perfect time to whip up this refreshing treat-and-toy combination. Blend together one of the following flavours:



Berry Delicious: 1 cup plain yogurt, 2 cups berries (e.g., blackberries, blueberries, raspberries or strawberries, or a mixture of these) and 2 tablespoons of honey

Gone Bananas: 1 cup plain yogurt, 1/3 cup natural, unsalted peanut butter and 1/2 banana (mashed)

Pumpkin Pie: 1 cup plain yogurt, 1 can of pumpkin purée, 1 teaspoon of honey and 1 banana (mashed)

Pour the mixture into a Kong® or other interactive feeder toy (a hollow, rubber toy that will contain the mixture) and freeze for a few hours. This will make your dog's playtime more challenging as he tries to get at the yummy goodness inside!



FOR YOUR CURIOUS CAT

Cats are predators just like their ancestors. So they love movements and sounds that trigger their instincts to hunt prey! You can keep your cat healthy and active by stimulating her desire to chase and pounce.

Scratching is also an important natural behaviour for cats. Your cat scratches to condition her claws and leave behind scent marks.

Best choices

- ✓ Dangly wands
- ✓ Plush toys, or toys you can fill with catnip
- ✓ Scratching posts and cat towers for climbing and perching
- ✓ Interactive feeders and food-dispensing balls



Be cautious

Cats can sometimes eat small toy parts. These can include:

- ◆ Feathers
- ◆ String, yarn, ribbon or elastic
- ◆ Bells
- ◆ Pom poms

If you find a toy that has any of the above, you don't necessarily need to avoid it! However, you'll have to make sure that you're paying extra close attention while your cat plays.



Make a Sock Toy

If you're on a budget, don't worry! Cats love exploring ordinary things like paper bags and cardboard boxes.

You can also make awesome do-it-yourself cat toys from common household items. Be creative – try making a pyramid using toilet paper rolls and a glue gun. You can hide treats in the rolls for your cat to find! Or, check out this cool DIY fish toy below.

You'll need:

- A single sock (that you don't want to wear anymore)
- Something to stuff your sock with, such as fabric or packing paper. Cats love the crinkly sound!
- Fabric markers or a felt tip pen to decorate your sock (optional)

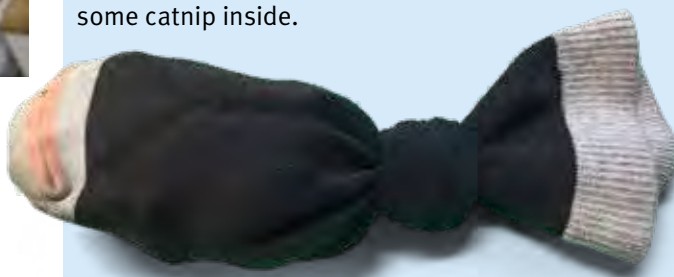
***TIP:** Pick a sock with a lighter colour than your pens, so that the design shows up well!

Step 1: Stuff your sock.

Step 2: Tie a small knot at the end of the sock to keep the stuffing inside. If you've found that the sock is too full to tie a knot, simply untie it, take some stuffing out and try again.

Step 3: Decorate your fish. You can draw eyes, a smile or even some scales!

Step 4: To encourage your cat to play with the fish, dangle it over your kitty's head, or toss it in the air to spark her prey instinct. She will also love it if you hide some catnip inside.



Have you ever heard of a snuffle mat?

Sometimes it's called snuffling, other times **nose work**. It's a dog's way of using his sense of smell to find a reward – like treats!

A snuffle mat is a toy that lets dogs express their natural behaviour. Searching for his food can be more satisfying for your dog than simply scarfing it out of a bowl.

Snuffle mats aren't just for dogs – cats love them too. Even guinea pigs, rabbits and ferrets can enjoy snuffling on mini mats.



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Make a mat!

Snuffle mats can be found at your local pet supply store, or online (like some of the examples on this page from Amazon).

But if you want a fun project, they're also easy to make yourself!

1. Start with a **rubber sink mat with holes**.
2. Use about 1.5 metres of **fleece fabric cut into strips**, which you can loop and knot through the holes in the mat.
3. Make a basic mat or try different shapes and patterns. Check out **YouTube** for some great instructional videos!



Start snuffling!

The first time you introduce the snuffle mat, have your pet watch while you sprinkle a few pieces of kibble or treats on top of the mat.

Once they've found the kibble, play again – but this time hide some of the food underneath the flaps of fleece.

As your dog catches on, make the game more challenging each time you play!

Safety tip!

Watch your pet while they snuffle. If left alone, they may chew and swallow the fleece, which can be harmful.

The **5** Freedoms Pledge

Is your dog your best friend? You're not alone! Dogs play with us and nap with us. They join us on family trips. They help us meet new two-legged and four-legged friends. Dogs comfort us when we are feeling sad. They make us laugh. They calm us down when we are feeling nervous. Let's face it, dogs are awesome.

Want to show your dog how much you love him? Take the **Five Freedoms Pledge**! The **Five Freedoms** are a set of animal welfare guidelines used around the world. Each freedom describes a different part of the care required to meet an animal's needs. Taken together, the **Five Freedoms** show us how to be great dog guardians.

I pledge to provide my dog, to the best of my abilities, with the **Five Freedoms**:

- ① **Freedom from hunger and thirst** by giving my dog the correct food and fresh water.
- ② **Freedom from pain, injury and disease** by providing my dog with regular veterinary care and a safe environment.
- ③ **Freedom from distress** by making sure my dog is never neglected or abused, and does not feel scared, anxious, frustrated or depressed.
- ④ **Freedom from discomfort** by providing my dog with a comfortable home that is warm, dry, clean and quiet.
- ⑤ **Freedom to express behaviours that promote well-being** by giving my dog the chance to play, explore, groom, eat, drink and rest as he chooses.

Remember, as guardians, we are responsible for our dogs' health and well-being. And guess what? With all you have learned in this dog care guide, you are ready to begin providing the **Five Freedoms** to your dog today!

