

Dangerous Dog Toys: What to Avoid, From Toxic Materials to Unsafe Designs

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The pet world is brimming with novel dog toys—a trend that can be equal parts exciting and confusing for today’s dog parents. Yes, the variety makes it easier to offer well-rounded enrichment for dogs. But with so many options available, how can pet parents reliably distinguish safe toys from hazardous ones? And what about popular conventional dog toys, like rope tugs and squeakers: can these carry risks as well?

Since play is important to our dogs’ health and happiness, we turn to the experts for answers. With their help, we break down what can make a toy potentially dangerous—and how dog parents can mitigate the risks to [find the right toy for their pup](#).

What exactly makes a toy safe—or unsafe—for dogs? According to Max Randall, a UK-based dog trainer and the founder of [MK9Plus Dog Training](#), there are a few parameters worth looking at.

If it’s not durable, it’s not safe

“One of the most important factors is the durability and strength of the toy,” says Randall. “Toys that are brittle or prone to breaking apart can pose a choking hazard or cause internal damage if ingested.”

Iram Sharma, DVM, a veterinarian and writer for [PupVine](#), agrees, advising pet parents to avoid cheap plastic and flimsy rubber that’s liable to break. “When broken, these toys can have sharp cracks that cause serious injuries to the dog’s mouth, nose, paws, or teeth,” she explains.

Trust your gut—if a toy doesn’t feel sturdy in your hands, then it’s definitely not sturdy for your pup. Opt instead for toys made with tough materials, like nylon or heavy-duty rubber (like the [KONG Classic](#), for example), that can withstand your dog’s chewing and playing habits.

KONG is a well-known and well-trusted brand in the pet world with toys made from durable materials.

“By being vigilant and choosing safe, high-quality toys, pet parents can help keep their dogs healthy and happy during playtime,” Randall emphasizes. “It’s also a good idea to monitor your dog’s play with toys, inspect the toys regularly for signs of wear and tear, and discard any that become damaged or worn out.”

Small pieces or attachments can pose a problem

Small pieces—like buttons, ribbons, strings, or tags—are another thing to watch. “Toys with small parts or loose components can be dangerous for dogs, as they can be easily torn apart and ingested, causing choking or intestinal blockages,” explains Randall.

Make sure your plush toys feature embroidery, not button eyes, before handing them over to your pup, and trim any tags that might give your dog easy purchase to tear a seam.

The wrong size might be dangerous

A toy’s size is important, too. “Toys that are too small can pose a choking hazard, especially for smaller dogs,” says Randall. “Toys that are too heavy or too hard can also be dangerous, as they can cause damage to teeth and gums.”

When choosing a new toy, make sure it's small enough for your dog to carry effortlessly in their mouth but also big enough that it *can't* be accidentally swallowed.

K_Thalhofer via iStock

The good news is that when used properly and under human supervision, many popular toy styles are safe for most dogs. That being said, all toys come with some element of risk. Here's what you should know to help minimize those risks.

Are rope toys dangerous for dogs?

The primary concern with [rope toys](#) is their tendency to fray over time. Once they unravel, individual strands can cause choking or GI obstructions. Rope toys can also harbor bacteria from your dog's mouth.

To avoid these risks, spring for a heavy-duty rope made with materials built to last, like [Mammoth Cotton-Blend Rope Toys](#). And make it a habit to wash and regularly inspect your rope toys for wear, discarding them once they've frayed.

Are squeaky toys dangerous for dogs?

By appealing to a dog's inner hunter, [squeaky toys](#) offer a species-appropriate activity that dogs love. While squeaky toys are suitable for most dogs, there are some pups with overzealous prey drives that might run into trouble.

These hunt dogs will stop at nothing until they've extracted the squeaker and "killed" their prey.

Not only does this create a mess (especially if there's stuffing involved), but it can also be problematic if a dog accidentally swallows the squeaker.

For these types of dogs, look for toys made from different materials like rubber or nylon that don't produce the same high-pitched squeaking sounds as traditional squeaky toys. Or opt for toys that have a different type of sound altogether, like a crinkling or rattling noise.