



Guide Dogs for the Blind

Puppy Raising Guidebook

Exercise, Play, and Toys

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Exercise and Play

Safe and Sound - Environmental Safety

- Puppies should only be allowed off leash in enclosed spaces. Otherwise, consider using a long-line or retractable (flexi-type) leash in a wide-open area.
- Do not visit areas with unfamiliar off-leash dogs around (off-leash hiking areas, etc.)
- GDB puppies are not allowed in dog parks.
- Play on non-slip flooring (carpet, grass, etc.) to reduce the risk of injury.

PAWsitive Play Time - Appropriate Types of Play

- Discourage prolonged frenzied play such as wrestling, roughhousing, chasing, or racing through the house.
- Tug is a great game to play! To prevent injury, do not swing or lift the puppy off the ground.
- Running after thrown toys is great too! Hold the pup stationary while you throw to minimize risk of puppies tumbling or straining a muscle trying to catch a toy mid-air.
- Do not jog, bike, or skateboard with puppies. Jogging can injure young puppy joints.

Taking it Easy - Prevent Fatigue and Overheating

- Take frequent breaks. A break is likely overdue if the puppy becomes mouthy, vocal, or excessively excited.
- Build stamina slowly! If a pup is not accustomed to heavy exercise (and a friend comes over for a sleepover!) be sure to gradually build up play time.
- Ensure puppies always have access to fresh clean drinking water.

Going for the Gold - Fitness Prep for Recall

- Guide dogs are athletes! In preparation for recall and formal guide training, we highly encourage puppies to gradually work up to about 30 minutes at a brisk walk.

Toy Policy

Toys each day keep puppies at play! Toys are an important part of a puppy's development. They offer opportunities for mental stimulation, enrichment, problem solving, and an outlet for natural puppy chewing. Having easy access to a variety of different types of toys help puppies make good choices and reduce destructive chewing and other attention-seeking behavior.

Choosing Safe Toys

Materials

Look for toys made of natural rubber, high-quality nylon, non-toxic, food-grade plastic or silicone, or fabric.

- Avoid toys with BPA, PVC, formaldehyde, or other toxic chemicals.
- We do not recommend toys with small hard pieces like buttons or glass eyes; they are a hazard to puppies.
- No household items (socks, towels, shoes, children's toys, etc.) as puppy play toys.
- No edible chews made from animal products – rawhide, bully sticks, pig ears, raw bones, and other popular chews can cause diarrhea or a blockage requiring surgery.

Size

Err on the side of too big! Puppies grow quickly.

- Choose toys that cannot be easily swallowed (wider than the dog's jaw).
- Hard toys cannot have small holes or rings that might inadvertently get stuck on a dog's jaw.

Maintenance

- Check toys regularly for wear & tear or signs of ripping/shredding.
- Wash toys regularly – a ride through the dishwasher or laundry machine can make boring old toys fun again!

Access

- Introduce all new toys while the pup is supervised to ensure they enjoy the toy safely.
- Dogs may earn unsupervised access to toys after demonstrating consistent safe behavior with the toy following [Maximizing Puppy Wellbeing and Safety](#).
- If you observe or suspect the puppy is ripping, shredding, or eating pieces of a toy, they should not have access to chew that toy. It may need to be a toy saved for interactive play or discarded if it's worn and torn.
- Pick up food-containing toys after they've been finished or abandoned. Consider it like a meal and keep people and pets out of the puppy's space while they're enjoying their food puzzle. Removing the food-containing toy after play keeps the toys feeling new and exciting for the puppy too!

Here are some ideas to get you started!

Durable chew toys



Kong brand toys (red for young puppies; we recommend the tougher black version as they mature)



Ruff Enough Toys from their “Guaranteed for Life Collection”



Genebone products: size MEDIUM or LARGE

Popular food-smeared or food-stuffed toys



Kong Wobbler or similar puzzle feeders



Gnawt-a-Cone™ from Ruffwear



West Paw Design toys



Outward Hound puzzle toys

Interactive Toys



Tug toys (e.g., **Ruffwear**, **JW pet**, **Tuffy**, etc.)



ChuckIt! Ultra Large Rubber Balls are 3" in diameter and a good size for most guide dog puppies, even when fully grown!

Independent Yard Play



Jollyball with a rope through middle, sold as Romp-N-Roll. Toss 'n' Floss is a similar large ball with rope through it.



Gallon sized or larger plastic bottles: Thoroughly rinsed, lids, labels and tops removed (**sturdy food-safe bottles only**)

Great options for young puppies!



Kong Wubba (regular or fleece “Snugga”)



Multipet Lamb Chop®



CycleDog Duraplush toys