

TOYS

Susan Isaacs, trainer
Phone: 310-248-2420
Email: susanisaacs@mac.com

When I ask a client which toy(s) his dog loves to play with, I often receive the reply, "Chauncey has a truckload of toys!"

Yes, but does he PLAY with them?

In this kind of situation, children and dogs are very similar. Give a kid all the toys she wants; pile the shelves of her bedroom with every toy she's ever asked for. Do you think she's going to play with all of them? Hardly. First, she has too many choices. Second, if whatever Lola wants, Lola gets, then the value to her of each toy is diminished.

Same goes for dogs! So, how do you tell which toys your dog loves to play with and which ones are just ho-hum?

Let's talk about play. There's the kind of play that keeps Chauncey busy when he's alone; and there's the kind of play that happens when you're around to engage with him.

Solitary play toys: Generally, these are items that Chauncey can enjoy chewing, without destroying or causing himself any harm. Chewing is a natural canine behavior that is good for a dog's teeth and that helps relieve stress. Provide something that gives a little under the tooth but that doesn't come apart. Something like a rubber Kong or a Nylabone. They come in different sizes and firmnesses, depending on your dog's size and chewing habits. Even an empty plastic container with the appropriate firmness can entertain a dog. Sometimes, the most fun toys aren't the costliest – some cost nothing!

Interactive play toys: Many toys are great for interactive games between you and your pooch. For example, a tug rope or a tennis ball can be great fun if the only time you make it appear is when you and Chauncey are going to play TOGETHER. You'll see how its value skyrockets in Chauncey's mind! As your dog's leader, make sure you decide when the game starts and when it ends. Don't wait until Chauncey's bored and walks away. When you're not playing together, put that special toy away where Chauncey can't find it.

