



EQUIPMENT FOR YOUR NEW DOG OR PUPPY

These Are a Few of Our Favorite Things

When you get a new puppy or dog, it's essential to know all about what kind of equipment you'll need for your new family member. Where will you keep your dog when you're not around to supervise? What kind of toys will you provide? How will you keep your dog busy when she's alone? What kind of equipment will you use when you walk your dog? All of these are important questions to consider. You'll find some items that we highly recommend below.

Crates & Confinement

It's important to set your new dog up to succeed, so when you bring her home with you, plan to supervise her very carefully until she gets used to her new environment. When you can't actively watch your dog, you'll need to leave her in a safe, secure area with plenty of things to chew on and toys to keep her busy. If she's confined in her designated dog-proofed place, she won't spend her time "redecorating" your house in your absence, when she may become lonely or bored.

Crates are great!

Crate training involves teaching your dog to rest or sleep in a box-shaped metal or plastic enclosure when you're not around to supervise her. There are two types of crates: plastic crates, which are sometimes used for airline travel, and pen-like metal crates. The crate acts as a management tool, preventing your furry friend from doing all kinds of "illegal" stuff—like eating your shoes, tearing down your curtains, de-stuffing your couch and getting into the garbage. It's also extremely useful when housetraining both puppies and adult dogs. Some people are reluctant to crate their pets, but remember that dogs' ancestors lived in dens, so your new pooch will naturally tend to like small, cozy places where she can curl up and hang out. If you'd like more detailed information about how to choose and use a crate, please see our handout, *Crate Training Your Dog*.

Other Ways to Confine Your Dog

If you choose not to use a crate, you'll need to find another way to safely confine your dog when you're not around to keep an eye on her. Set up an area that's free of things she could destroy (no remote controls, pillows or tasty leather items), as small as possible, and securely sectioned off from the rest of your house with doors, baby gates or an exercise pen. (These days, you can find both baby gates and pens at most major pet stores.) Kitchens and laundry rooms work well for this purpose.

Toys & Playtime

There are all kinds of fantastic ways to entertain and interact with your new companion. Playing with her often will foster the bond between you. You should also provide "jobs" for your dog to do when she's alone—activities that will satisfy her natural urges and prevent her from coming up with less desirable ways to occupy her time.

Toys to Enjoy Together

Teaching your dog how to play with you appropriately is very important. Most dogs, being dogs, enjoy playing with their mouths. They have natural, hard-wired urges to grab and tug on things. Obviously, it can be mighty unpleasant if those things turn out to be your skin or clothing! To prevent that kind of mouthy play, teach your dog how much fun it is to play together with toys. You can play tug and fetch with ropes, stuffed animals, floppy or hard Frisbees, and all kinds of balls. These days, your choices are limitless! When you and your dog play with her toys, help her understand that you'd like her to put her mouth on THEM, rather than on YOU. If, while you're playing, your dog grabs your hands or clothes, say "Ouch!" in a high-pitched voice and immediately stop the game for a few minutes. With repetition, your canine playmate will learn that all the fun stops when she's not careful with her jaws.

Food Puzzle Toys

Many people don't realize that dogs need lots of mental stimulation. Most were originally bred to do some kind of job—so without plenty of things to do, many pet dogs become frustrated and bored. Sometimes, for lack of enough activities to keep them busy, they resort to destructive behavior.

Teaching your dog to play with food puzzle toys is a great way to provide an outlet for her mental and physical energy. We highly recommend them. They'll give your dog's brain and jaws a great work-out—and they'll keep her busy when she's by herself. Here are some of our favorites:

- The Kong: a tough, hollow rubber toy that you can fill with kibble, treats, soft dog food, a little cream cheese or peanut butter, etc. You can also freeze these toys after packing them with food/treats, so they pose more of a challenge to your dog.
- The Buster Cube: a hard, square puzzle toy that has a "maze" inside. You pour dry kibble into the toy, and then your dog rolls it around on the floor to get the food to come out, a few pieces at a time.
- Premier's Tug-a-Jug: a hard, hollow bottle-shaped toy with a rope attached. You can put food inside for your dog to get out when she's alone AND use the Tug-a-Jug as an interactive tug toy when the two of you play together.

To keep your dog extra-employed, you can feed her ALL of her meals in puzzle toys instead of her bowl. Working to get her chow out of the toys will challenge and entertain her. When your dog becomes a puzzle-toy pro, you can even hide them around the house before you leave your dog home alone, and then she can "hunt" her breakfast or dinner while you're gone!

Chew Time!

Dogs of all ages (yes, adult dogs too) need to chew on things regularly, both to exercise their jaws and satisfy their deeply rooted instincts to chew and rip things apart. It's just a normal part of being a dog. So it makes sense that dogs actively seek things to chew. If you don't provide appropriate and appealing options, your dog will find things to chew on her own. Most dogs gnaw on our stuff simply because we haven't given them appropriate alternatives. You can provide many different chewing choices for your new dog:

- Try offering inedible chew items, like Nylabones and indestructible hard rubber toys.
- You can also give your dog edible chews, like rawhide, marrow bones, bully sticks and pig ears. (You'll want to stick around when you give your dog these, however, just to be sure that your dog doesn't swallow too big a piece of a chew and choke. If you're unsure about whether or not—or how often—you should give your dog edible chew things, call your veterinarian.)

Walking Equipment

Most dogs, in their enthusiasm, tend to pull on-leash during outings, so it's important to choose equipment that helps reduce canine "freight train" tendencies. These days, there are many different choices available—but some kinds of equipment are easier to use and more effective in reducing on-leash pulling than others. We recommend the following products:

The Head Halter



The head halter works just like a halter for a horse does. It fits over your dog's snout. When she tries to pull forward, her head is turned to the side, making pulling impossible (or at least extremely difficult). This product provides power steering! It's very effective, and most dogs tolerate head halters well if acclimated to them correctly. (Directions for acclimation are provided with the products—and we can explain the process to you too. Just visit call out Behavior Helpline for assistance.) It's important to note that although a head halter prevents pulling, it won't prevent your dog from opening her mouth normally to pant, eat treats or drink water. It is NOT a muzzle and doesn't function like one at all. The most popular brands are Premier's Gentle Leader (pictured here), sold at our Lora Robins gift shop and some major pet stores, and the Halti.

The Front-Clip Harness



Though they don't provide quite as much control as head halters, front-clip harnesses works very well to decrease pulling, and some dogs seem to prefer wearing them. Unlike other types of harnesses that *don't* reduce pulling, the front-clip harness has a ring at the front (attached to the strap that goes across the dog's chest), where you clip on the leash. The most popular brands are Premier's Easy-Walk Harness (pictured here) and the Sense-ation Harness, both sold in our gift shop.

Resources

If you need additional advice about equipment—or about your dog's behavior in general—please call our **Behavior Helpline: (804) 643-SPCA**. We'd be happy to help. If you'd like us to help you choose toys, purchase a crate or fit walking equipment for your dog, feel free to come to our Lora Robins Gift Shop at the shelter for personal assistance.