

High-Tech Toys for Dogs

In the history of the domestication of animals, the dog—via its wild cousin, the wolf—was arguably the first species to be tamed for use by ancient man, who domesticated wolves to hunt game between 10,000 and 20,000 years ago, [1] And, while canines are still used in such working roles, their place in the human household has evolved substantially since those early days. Now, most dogs have a privileged place in the modern home. Not only are they given a life of leisure and free from any tasks or chores, they are lavished with food, treats, and toys on a daily basis. Looking at the marked growth of the latter category—toys—is most telling about the place of dogs in today's society.



Photo Source:

http://www.petco.com/shop/shoppingguides/petco_choosedogtoys_shoppingguideid_22_nav_288.aspx

Dog Toys Over Time

Once upon a time, when families couldn't imagine actually paying to procure playthings for the domesticated animals on their property (which were still viewed as working animals), the typical toys were whatever the dog or an owner could find: a stick, a bone, a piece of rope, a handmade ball. [2]



Photo Source: http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/23/dog_retrieving_stick.jpg

But, as the Industrial Revolution transformed the country from a rural society into more of an urban one, most dogs saw their status on the family totem pole move up from worker to companion. And, as manufacturing matured, store-bought goods become more and more popular, and advertising convinced owners to “enrich” their pets’ lives, early rubber toys came to the fore. [2]

The market continued to evolve and expand over the years, producing more and more intelligent designs that would challenge dogs and keep them occupied. Milestones include the creation of the Nylabone in 1955, the yellow tennis ball in 1972, the Kong Classic in 1976, and the Buster Food Cube in 1997. [2]



Photo Source: <http://smartshopbuy.com/images/animalsupplies/nylabone-durable-pooch-pacifier-chew-bone-val.jpg>

Dog Toys Today

But, despite that continual progression in dog toys, the past decade or so has seen drastic changes in the market due to the growth of modern technology and the sophistication of small consumer electronics. Today's dog toys and accessories not only challenge Rex and keep him occupied for hours, but they provide the pets' human counterparts with insight into the canine brain. Here are some of our favorites.

Puppy Tweets

If you're like most dog owners, you've probably mused about what exactly your dog does home alone when you're gone. Drink from the toilet, bark at squirrels, nap on the couch, and repeat? Well Puppy Tweets can help answer that question. This electronic dog tag, worn on your dog's collar, has a sensor with an accompanying USB receiver that connects to your computer. The device measures level of movement, sound, time of day, and day of the week and then sends one of several humorous Tweets to Twitter. For example, when your dog barks, the Tweet might read, "Bark...and the whole neighborhood barks with you!" Or when your dog is sleeping, the message might be, "Had a wonderful dream about you. You were bringing me snacks!" Keep track on your smartphone for constant smiles all day long! [3]



Photo Source: http://static.ibnlive.com/pix/slideshow/11-2010/in-pics-top/07_puppy_tweets_011110.jpg

Cat & Dog Pet's Eye View Camera

For an even more detailed account of your dog's doings while you're out of the house, try the Cat & Dog Pet's Eye View Camera. This lightweight, compact digital camera clips onto your dog's collar and takes photos every one, five, or 15 minutes, depending on your preference. The internal memory can store up to 40 photos, and it's compatible with both PC and Mac systems (USB cable included for uploading photos). While you may get a kick out of the photos, there can be practical applications, too: If your dog gets into the trash or other trouble but you're not sure how, this could be the key to tracking their behavior patterns and correcting bad habits. [4]



Photo Source: <http://www.perpetualkid.com/cat-and-dog-pet-s-eye-view-camera.aspx>

Glimmer Ball and Hedgehog Hop

The dog toy brand Dogtronics is completely devoted to creating stimulating, interactive toys that light up, make sounds, and even move. One of their coolest products is the Glimmer Ball, which takes the old-fashioned ball concept to a whole new level with touch-activated light. The flickering lights encourage the dog's instinct to chase, and the light show makes outdoor nighttime play much more fun. [5] We also like the Hedgehog Hop, a plush toy that literally jumps about and triggers your dog's natural hunting instinct, encouraging both healthy physical and mental activity. [6]



Photo Source: <http://dogtronics.com/glimmer-ball-light-toy>



Photo Source: <http://dogtronics.com/hedgehog-hop-motion-toy>

Babble Ball

Dogs across the country are in love with this interactive toy that provides endless entertainment. The Babble Ball is a rubber ball that emits prerecorded sounds and sayings (i.e., “Grrr,” “Sweet puppy,” or “Meow”) when your dog touches it, breathes on it, or even walks by it. It turns on when activated and shuts off automatically. Now available in the “Wisecracking” and “Animal Sounds” series, the ball’s ever-changing messages and sensitivity make your dog think that it’s actually alive. [7]



Photo Source: <http://stores.babble-ball.com/-strse-18/large-animal-sounds-babble/detail.bok>

Sleepy Bunny

Not only is this plush toy an adorable companion for your new puppy or rescue dog, but it combines scientific research and the latest technology to soothe and comfort your dog. Based on the fact that dogs find comfort in a steady pulse or heartbeat sound, which reminds them of the safety of being with their mothers, the Sleepy Bunny emits a pulse via the Puppy Pulse device that is inserted into an internal pocket. The toy helps lull Spike into a good night's sleep, even in a new environment. [8]



Photo Source: <http://www.seapets.co.uk/products/dog-supplies/dog-toys-and-treats/dog-toys/puppy-toys/sleepy-bunny-by-edison.html>

Sources:

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