

I'm wondering why some dogs don't like to play. We have a rescued three year old mixed breed dog. She doesn't seem to like any toys that we have bought her so far. If we throw a ball she just looks at it. She won't carry or chew on a stuffed animal or squeaky toy.

This may just be your dog's personality. Some dogs are naturally more playful and interested in toys than others. Some breeds are genetically programmed to chase vermin or retrieve hunted animals so these skills carry over to their play with balls and other toys. It is also possible that your dog didn't have all the opportunities to learn how to play as a young pup. She may have been the only pup in the litter, or she may have suffered some level of neglect or abuse resulting in her energy being directed toward survival. She could have missed out on the pleasurable developmental stage that young pups experience as they learn about their world through play with their mothers, littermates and human caretakers.

It may help to spark her interest if you and another person play a lively game of catch in front of her, or maybe have a friend bring a dog to visit who likes to play with toys and have her watch. If the various types of toys you have tried don't interest her, adding some delicious treats to the mix may help. Try stuffable rubber toys that you can fill with peanut butter or treats. If she is food motivated at all, this should get her interested in chewing and playing with the toy. There are also plastic balls that can be filled with treats. She'll learn how to roll the ball around as she gets an instant reward of a treat when it lands the right way. Once she is interested in the ball that dispenses treats she may start to show more interest in other types of balls. Avoid giving her tennis balls to play with. The rough surface can be very abrasive and wear down a dog's teeth.

If all of your creative ideas don't work in getting her to play, you can certainly help her to have fun in other ways. Some dogs seem to enjoy obedience work and others love agility training. These are excellent ways to bond with her while you both get the benefit of exercise.

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