

## Toy Selection Guide for Ferrets

*Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff*



# proper ferret toys

## and their benefit

As you probably already figured out, ferrets are very playful, intelligent creatures! [Toys](#) are necessary to keep them occupied and to help stimulate their natural

intelligence and problem solving capabilities. A ferret that has no toys to play with can become unhappy, bored and depressed which can lead to destructive behaviors (eating fabric, digging in the litter box, etc) and health problems. Consider toys to be a kind of therapy for your fuzzy. When you provide interesting toys for your ferret to play with, you also help to keep him out of the things in your house that you don't want him to play with. So what kinds of toys are best? What can you do to keep your ferret from getting bored with his toys? How can you make sure that the toys you choose are safe?

### What kind of toys should I get for my ferret?

Ferrets find toys that stimulate their natural, instinctual behaviors - hunting, [digging](#) and [tunneling](#) - to be the most interesting. Toys that move work very well to challenge their hunting instincts. These include toys on an elastic string, [cat teasers](#), battery powered toys, and wind up toys. All of these will give them the sensation of the hunt and stimulate their natural hunting drive.

Toys that make noise are also popular with our fuzzy friends. They are more interactive, and the ferret will find them more interesting. Ferrets like to get your attention, and likewise, they think they are getting a reaction out of their toys when it makes a noise in response to their actions. Balls that jingle or rattle, toys that crinkle or rustle, toys that vibrate - these are all very attractive to a ferret!

[Squeaky toys](#) can also be very popular with ferrets, but we would recommend that while you always have one around the house, you save it for times when you are

trying to locate ferrets or in case of an emergency. Most ferrets (unless they are deaf) will usually come running to the sound of a squeak toy. Some speculate that the ferret either thinks he needs to protect a kit being attacked, or he's hearing the noise of a predator attacking another ferret. It is a good idea to train your ferret to come running at the sound of a squeak toy, as having a way to gather your ferrets to you quickly could save their lives someday.

One of the best toys for a ferret is a [dig box](#). You can purchase a dig box or you can make your own. Ferrets are always going to dig in or at something, so dig boxes work very well to help eliminate digging at furniture, at the carpet, and in the litter box. They provide the ferret with a safe, fun, non-destructive place to satisfy his digging instincts. Some fillers for dig boxes include biodegradable starch peanuts, long grain rice, potting soil, sand, ping-pong balls, shredded newspaper or paper, dried beans and pebbles. Never use Styrofoam peanuts.



Ferrets cannot digest the Styrofoam, and it can cause a life-threatening blockage. Likewise, steer clear of instant rice. If eaten, it will immediately swell up in your ferret's stomach and cause problems. No matter what you fill your dig box with, always supervise your ferrets in the dig box initially to make sure they aren't eating the filler!

Another favorite ferret toy is any kind of tunnel. Ferrets have long been used in a tunneling capacity, for "ferreting" (hunting animals in their burrows) and to lay cable. Ferrets were even used to run sound and TV cables for the wedding of Prince Charles! The shape of their bodies - long with a very flexible spine - lends itself well to running through tunnels.

Digging & Tunneling Toys:

[Ferret Safe Dig Boxes](#)

[Super Thru-Way Ferret Tunnel](#)



Due to their high level of intelligence and natural problem-solving abilities, ferrets also need toys that stimulate them mentally. Toys that provide them with a puzzle to solve and challenge them work well in this regard. The most popular are toys that require them to figure out how to get a treat.

Problem Solving Toy:

## [Teach & Treat Toy](#)

Ferrets of all ages love to chew, so it's important to provide them with safe chew toys. Ferrets that don't have safe chew toys will find something in your house to chew on, such as the rubber buttons on the remote control or other items that could cause blockages and other serious health problems.

Ferret Safe Chew Toys:

### [N-Bone Chew Treats](#)

Obviously, these aren't even close to all the toys available to keep our fuzzies occupied and happy! It's up to you to find the toy your ferret prefers most. Avoid purchasing toys that are made from soft rubber or latex, as these could easily be ingested and cause blockages. Do not give your ferret any toys with small parts unless you can remove the small parts first.

#### **My ferret gets bored with his toys, what do I do?**

Because of their intelligence, ferrets will quickly map out their surroundings and all the things in them that occupy their time. This means that if your ferret has access to a toy all day every day, he's going to get bored with that toy very quickly. Then you will see your ferret either hide it somewhere and leave it there, or ignore it completely!



A major part of giving your ferret toys is to continuously give him something "new" to play with. This doesn't mean that you have to have an endless supply of toys! It just means you need to be creative with the ones you do have. The easiest way to get this variety is to group the toys into two or more groups. Then rotate the toys once or twice a week so the toys are effectively "new" again because the ferret hasn't seen them in a few days. If you have a dig box, only give your ferret access to it a few times a week. You can also try giving a toy a new scent by spraying it with scented water or putting it in a plastic bag with some potting soil or other outdoor item. There are many things you can do to keep your ferret's toys new and interesting, it just takes a little imagination!

#### **How do I make sure my ferret's toys are safe?**

You should perform regular "toy maintenance" to determine whether or not the ferret's toys are safe for him to play with. Inspect them on a weekly basis (more often for serious chewers) and look for torn seams, exposed stuffing or foam, cracks in the plastic, or any parts that are loose and could be ingested. If there is anything wrong with the toy, throw it away immediately and replace it.

It is our responsibility as ferret owners to make sure that our ferrets are the healthiest and happiest that they can be. Part of this is providing them with a stimulating environment and fun, interesting playthings. The [toys](#) listed in this

article aren't even close to the number of toys available. The important thing is to provide your ferret with the toys that will allow him to exercise his natural instincts and abilities!