

PROJECT INSTRUCTIONS

Let's Make Rope Toys for Dogs 🐕!

A fun, creative way to give shelter dogs the gift of play.

APPROX. TIME

15 min / toy

Longer for larger batches

PLANNING NEEDED

Easy

Collect old t-shirts in advance

GRADE LEVEL

3rd Grade & Up

Adult help with scissors

BEST FOR

Solo or groups

Whole class, scouts, families

ANIMALS HELPED

Dogs 🐕 — especially larger breeds — at your local shelter or rescue

Purpose

Animal shelters and rescues appreciate rope toys — especially for larger dogs. A friendly game of tug of war is fun and stimulating for dogs and provides an easy way to socialize and play. Best of all, these toys are made from recycled t-shirts, so they're free to make and easy to produce in large quantities.



Materials List

- ☐ **Old t-shirts** — gather your own, ask friends, or collect them at school. Different colors and sizes all work.
- ☐ **Scissors** — a good sharp pair for cutting the fabric into strips.
- ☐ **That's it.** This project is completely free to make from recycled materials.

Instructions

You can make rope toys in different lengths — some thick, some thin. They don't have to be exactly the same.

1. Lay your t-shirt on a flat surface. Starting at the bottom, cut along the side seams to remove each sleeve. You'll be left with the front, the back, and 2 sleeves — the sleeve pieces get used for tying in step 4.
2. Cut the front and back pieces into strips about 2–4 inches wide. *Tip: you can also rip the t-shirt if that's easier.*
3. Choose 3 strips of about the same length. Mix colors or keep them the same — it's up to you. (You can also make a rope toy with 2 strips, or more than 3.)
4. Cut a piece of sleeve fabric and tie off one end of your strips, about 1–2 inches from top.
5. Braid away. Keep your braid tight and even.
6. Tie off the other end the same way.
7. Repeat with the remaining strips. Have fun — make a whole batch!

Standards Connections

Framework	Connection
Common Core ELA	Reading — following multi-step written instructions. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.3.3, RI.4.3, RI.5.3) Speaking & Listening — students collaborate and give directions during making. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.3.1, SL.4.1, SL.5.1) Writing — optional reflection on the experience. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.3, W.4.3, W.5.3)
Common Core Math	Measurement — measuring and cutting strips to specified widths (2–4 inches), practicing ruler skills and estimation (CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.3.MD.B.4; 4.MD.A.1; 5.MD.A.1) Operations — scaling up production, e.g. calculating total strips needed for a large batch (CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.3.OA.A.1; 4.OA.A.1)
SEL Competencies	Social Awareness — empathy for shelter animals; Responsible Decision-Making — choosing which shelter to donate to; Relationship Skills — students communicate and collaborate effectively with peers to complete a shared goal.
Service Learning	Community need (shelter enrichment); meaningful hands-on service; toys donated to a local shelter; student reflection on impact.

Video

Title	URL
TikTok — LiveKindly: How to make rope toys from old t-shirts	https://www.tiktok.com/@livekindly/video/7200141432152182059

Project Photos

Project in progress — students making toys



Finished project - completed rope toys



Reflection & Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think play and enrichment matter for dogs waiting to be adopted?
2. How does making something with your own hands for an animal feel different from donating money or supplies?
3. What would you do differently if you made another batch? Would you change the size, colors, or style?

Extension Ideas

- Organize a t-shirt collection drive at your school to gather materials for a whole-class production day.
- Visit the shelter to donate the toys in person — ask if you can see the dogs enjoy them.
- Write a letter to the shelter telling them about your project and who made the toys.
- Document your project with photos and share on social media — tag **@pawsupprojects** and your local shelter.

Did you do this project?

We'd love for you — or an adult — to post your project on Paws Up Projects to inspire others.

pawsupprojects.org/post-your-project