

Chewing Guide to ARK Chew Tools



Need help choosing which chew tools will be the best fit? You've come to the right place! Below is an in-depth explanation of the different hardness levels for ARK chews, what the best recommendations are, and more.

HOW OLD IS THE CHILD / PERSON?

For babies and toddlers (under about the age of 2.5 years): The options are ARK's Baby Grabber®, Baby Guitar, Baby Chew Ring, Heart Chew, and/or Reindeer Chew. We especially recommend the Baby Grabber - it has a stem that's long enough for babies to reach their molars, but short enough so that it doesn't go back too far. The Baby Guitar is also a similar shape, but with added texture on the stem for extra sensory input. Both are easy for little hands to hold.

For 2.5 years and up: ARK's Grabber®, Textured Grabber®, Guitar, and/or Y-Chew® are great choices - these all have a longer stem for older kids and adults.

For 5 years and up: ARK chew necklaces and bracelets becomes an option as well.

For 6-7 years and up: ARK pencil topper chews become a great fit, too, especially for schoolwork.

DOES THE PERSON CHEW WITH THEIR BACK TEETH, FRONT TEETH, OR BOTH?

If the person currently chews on things with their back teeth, you'll want to get a chew tool with a long slender extension that can reach the back teeth (ARK's Grabber®, Guitar, Y-Chew, Krypto-Bite®, Brick Stick™, or Bite Saber®). If they chew mostly with their front teeth and/or pre-molars, you have a wider selection to choose from, as shape doesn't matter much in that case (you can chew on any chew tool with your front teeth). If you're not sure what the person's preferences are, when in doubt, go with a back molar shape as that will cover both bases.

DOES THE PERSON CHEW THROUGH / CAUSE DAMAGE TO WHAT THEY CURRENTLY CHEW ON?

All ARK chews come in 3 color-coded toughness levels:

- *Standard/Soft* - the softest, "chewiest" option that you can "sink your teeth" into the most. Recommended for mild chewing (for individuals who do not chew through anything that they chew on).
- *XT / Medium Firm* - XT stands for "Xtra Tough." This option is firmer, but still fairly chewy. Recommended for moderate chewing (for individuals who sometimes chew through things and/or have chewed through the standard level before). Depending on the shape of the chew, this level is usually most similar to the firmness of Pink Pearl erasers.
- *XXT / Super Firm* - XXT stands for "Xtra Xtra Tough." This is the most firm option. These are pretty tough and rigid, but still chewable. Although no chew tool is indestructible, this is usually the longest lasting level in any given shape for heavy chewers.

We recommend starting with the standard/softest level by default. Unless the person chews through or causes damage to things that they currently chew on, in which case it's usually best to go up to the middle XT level (if you want something that will last longer).

If someone does chew through things - it's possible they may eventually need the toughest XXT level, but we usually don't recommend getting that one to start with (unless they've already chewed through other chews and/or very hard items like legos, hard plastic toys, wooden items, etc.). Otherwise, XXT may be too hard for their liking.

When in doubt, we always recommend leaning towards something softer rather than harder. We've never had anyone ever say they didn't like a chew because it was too soft (they may eventually chew through it and need something tougher, but they'll still use the chewier ones). But we do sometimes hear that someone didn't like their chew because it was too hard.

NARROWING IT DOWN FROM THERE:

- Choosing between any of the handheld chews is mostly just preference. The Grabber® and Guitar both have a built-in loop handle that some people prefer. The Y-Chew® has 3 different extensions to chew on.
- Choosing between the different ARK chewelry designs is also mostly preference. If the individual likes chewing with their back molars, go with ARK's Krypto-Bite®, Brick Stick™, or Bite Saber®. Other than that - go with whichever design you think the person will like the best.
- ARK's chewable bracelets (in smooth or textured) are a great alternative for those who can't wear necklaces, and/or for those who tend to chew their sleeves.
- ARK's chewable pencil toppers are a great idea for those who tend to chew on their pencils.
- If the individual likes chewing on something fairly thin (like fingernails), go with the Chew Tags or Arrowhead.
- The Dino-Bite®, Super Star, Basketball, and Ring are the "beefiest" pendants (so they're usually the longest lasting shapes for avid chewing).
- Some ARK chew tools are smooth, others have tactile bumps and/or ribs. Sensory seekers usually love texture. Some people don't care for the texture. When in doubt, choose a smooth option.
- If you are using ARK chew tools to work on oral motor skills - the Grabber® and/or Y-Chew® are the best options for that. Start with the soft/standard versions and progress to the XT to gradually build jaw strength.

GOOD TO KNOW:

- Some people may want a variety of chew tool shapes and toughness levels. Sensory preferences can vary from day to day or even hour to hour. At times they may want something very chewy (the soft level). At other times they may want something more rigid that provides a lot of resistance / proprioceptive feedback to the jaw (XXT level).
- Each toughness level is not necessarily 100% equal from shape to shape. For example, ARK's Dino-Bite® in XXX will feel tougher than ARK's Brick Stick™ in XXX. This is because geometry plays a big role - the Dino-Bite® is wider and more robust, whereas the Brick is more slender. As another example, the Saber Tooth narrows down to a point, so that part of the pendant feels a bit softer than the rest of the pendant (which is also why the Saber Tooth is not recommended for avid chewing).
- Keep in mind that everyone has different preferences. We've had parents tell us that they've received their package and feel the XXX is too tough for their child, but when their child actually tries it, he/she loves it. XXX may feel too tough for one person's jaw, but for others it is just right. We all have different levels of sensory needs.
- Sensory preferences can throw us curveballs sometimes. Which means that in a rare case, someone may prefer to chew on the soft level, but needs the XXX in terms of intensity. In other words, the XXX is too firm for their liking, even though XXX would last the longest for how strongly they chew. At the end of the day, if someone won't use a chew tool because it's too tough, then it won't serve its purpose. So in this case, it's best to stick with the softer chews that they prefer. They may chew through them more quickly than the XXX, but at least they will use them instead of chewing on other potentially harmful items.
- In addition to a chew tool, other sensory / calming strategies may also be helpful. Consult with an occupational therapist if needed.
- For the necklaces, the cord and clasp are not meant for chewing. Some kids may gravitate to the cord and/or clasp in the beginning, in which case you'll need to redirect them. Each time they try to chew on the cord or clasp (or anything else), remind them to chew on the pendant instead. Be consistent and patient, as it may take some time to redirect the habit. For the best results, it helps to get everyone involved in redirecting - teachers, parents, siblings, grandparents, babysitters, etc. If redirecting won't work, or if the individual can't wear anything around their neck, you can try tying the necklace to a zipper pull or through a button hole instead. Bracelets are also a great alternative to necklaces.
- The Y-Chew® XXX, Sidekick XXX, and Mega Brick XXX are typically the overall longest lasting chews for avid chewing.



Copyright © 2017
ARK Therapeutic
703 Clemson Road
Columbia, SC 29229