

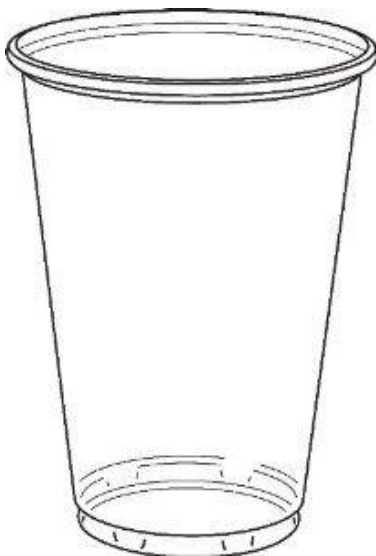


Canine Enrichment

Reasons you should add enrichment activities to your dogs daily routine:

- Helps to decrease boredom and anxious behavior like barking, licking, and pacing.
- Lessens destructive behaviors like chewing up shoes, furniture, digging holes, and shredding beds.
- Sniffing, licking, and chewing is proven to lower stress hormones and lower the heart rate to help your dog calm down.
- Lets your dog learn coping skills by practicing lowering their own stress.
- Can create positive associations to triggers that normally provoke a reaction.
- Helps to burn excess energy (great for rainy or cold days).
- Helps to build mental stability and problem-solving skills.
- Helps with separation anxiety.
- Games and training help to build the bond and trust in you and your dog's relationship.
- Physical exercise benefits memory and learning.
- A way to add extra enjoyment to your dogs day!

Most dogs spend 20 or more hours a day inside the house repeating the same behavior daily. Giving your dog multiple opportunities a day to problem solve, use their senses, and enjoy being a dog can help to deter your dog from destructive behavior or obsessive compulsive behaviors. Reactive, fearful, and hyper-active dogs benefit greatly from enrichment to help build mental stability. Think of your dogs mental stability as a cup that starts empty each day. Enrichment helps to fill that cup to help safeguard your dog from being overwhelmed, frustrated, and over-threshold from minimal life interactions.



Dogs that are functioning on empty cups may show behaviors like;

- Taking a long time to recover from social interaction, such as: not being able to calm down, staying fixated, or becoming increasingly stressed.
- Over-reacting to minimal noises or interactions.
- Pacing
- Shutting down
- Restlessness
- Obsessive fixations
- Tends to stay on edge

Some dogs will find it hard to keep their cup full, they are more easily affected by stressors this can be caused mostly by genetics and life experience. These types of dogs benefit from frequent breaks, small exposure times to triggers, and having a safe space of their own.



These are types of enrichment that you can add to your routine today to fill your dogs cup:

Physical exercise

Individual breeds were originally designed for specific work. While your dog may not perform this work now, physical exercise is still important. Pick 3 physical activities a day, most breeds thrive on one to two hours of physical exercise a day.

- Running (You can add an attachment to your bike to connect your dog to)
- Walking, and hiking
- Agility (make your own at home; broom over chairs for a jump, hula hoop tunnel, or weave poles made from fence posts)
- Herding (Jolly ball and jolly egg)
- Flirt pole (Let your dog chase)
- Swimming
- Stairs - Running up and down the stairs a few times when you can't get outside is great for building muscle. Just be sure not to push your dog too hard, as this exercise is just as strenuous for dogs as it is for people. Take special care with Dachshunds, Pembroke Welsh Corgis, and other dogs with long backs and shorter legs, because stairs may prove more challenging for these dogs.
- Digging (Give your dog a space to dig in your yard, or a kiddie pool full of sand to hide toys and treats in)
- Hide-and-seek gets your dog moving and provides mental stimulation. You can also work in a game of chase
- Treadmill. If you're looking for a great dog exercise for high-energy breeds, look no further than a treadmill. With careful training, your dog may grow to love her treadmill workouts. While they are not a replacement for a walk or a run outside, treadmills build endurance and don't rely on decent weather.

Olfactory Stimulation (Using their nose) and food

Your dog's strongest sense is their sense of smell, and they experience the world differently than we do. Dog's gather most of their information through their nose. Pick 3-5 activities a day for you and your dog to try.

- Sniff walks (Allow your dog to lead the way sniffing anything and everything along the way. Let them take their time and explore don't rush them. Pulling on the leash should still not be allowed, if your dog pulls on the leash stop and wait for slack in the leash again before moving forward. You can do this exercise with a long line in a large open space like a park.)
- Nose work games (Get creative here the possibilities are endless. Hide treats under the edge of rugs, under couch cushions, under cups/bowls, wrapped in a blanket or towel. Once hidden invite your dog into the room and encourage them to search.)
- Puzzle toys



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- Kong or any toy that you could put food in (Go the extra step and after the food is inside freeze the toy, keep multiple frozen and ready. Foods to put inside; wet dog food, peanut butter, yogurt, banana, blueberries, any dog-safe food that your dog enjoys.)
- Lick mat (Can also be frozen)
- Snuffle mat (Can also toss food in the grass or snow)
- Ball pits (You can put them inside a kiddie pool or box and toss in treats and kibble.)
- Make your own treat boxes (Take empty boxes and fill with paper or fabric material then toss in food. Empty cereal boxes, paper towel tubes, and even shoe boxes are great puzzles and shredding material.)

Social Enrichment

- Social enrichment means giving your dog sufficient opportunities to socialize with other pets and people. (Only if this is something your dog enjoys or is in the prime socialization age. Letting your dog choose when they want to start and stop interactions is crucial, they should not be forced to interact with people and dogs.)



Sensory Enrichment

- Activities that engage the senses, examples would be; exposure to different surfaces (tarp, bridges, sand, rocks, and different types of flooring) different sounds like fireworks, children laughing, vacuums, or emergency vehicles.

Training and games

Never stop teaching your dog, your dog loves to learn and it keeps them mentally sharp. Dog's also love to play and are naturally playful, you can create a lot of your own games as well. Keep teaching and learning as a team to keep your relationship strong. Are you all out of ideas? Google dog tricks and get some new ideas. Take a class and learn to perfect your skills, try something new with an agility class.



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What a day with enrichment can look like

Need a moment of peace? (Keep these on hand for when needed)

Lick mats - There are many different types of lick mats and lick bowls, find one that your dog likes. You can use any dog-safe food that you have, try a mixture of different things. You can cover part of the mat or bowl in pumpkin, peanut butter, yogurt, banana, or wet dog food. Put them in your freezer and let them freeze overnight. You can have these ready for any time you need to keep your dog busy or need to calm them down. Try giving one to your dog next time you have guests over, they are restless, anxious, not able to get enough exercise due to rain or snow, or you need time to cook dinner or take a phone call.

Puzzle toys - These are also great to keep your dog busy and help them calm down. They encourage problem-solving and can help to drain them mentally.

Ditch the bowl (For every meal)

Snuffle mats - Snuffle mats are available in many different sizes and difficulties. Consider feeding your dog their kibble in a snuffle mat at meals instead of a bowl. You can also toss their food in the grass and encourage them to search for it. You can also surprise your dog throughout the day by tossing small treats inside the mat.

Treat-dispensing toys - Kong wobbler, Kong gyro, Starmark bob-a-lot, these are just a few examples of brands that make treat dispensing toys. You can put your dogs meal inside and let them interact and play while having breakfast or dinner. You can also make your own, try putting kibble in a water bottle, use an empty cereal box and poke holes in it, make your own ball pit fill a kiddie pool with balls and toss kibble inside, or sprinkle kibble\ treats on a towel or blanket roll it up and invite your dog to figure it out.

Physical exercise (Multiple times a day)

Traditional walks are always good to get out of the house and stretch your legs, but consider something different. If you have a long line take your dog to an open park and let them lead the way with their nose. Let them take their time and investigate everything along the way. Doing this activity is a great time to work on your recall and focus in a stimulating area. Try to get your dog out to explore multiple times a day whether at a park, pet store, on a walk, or if your dog enjoys other dogs letting them interact with other dogs.