



Puzzle Toys

When the Kong company was doing research on puzzle toys, they discovered that dogs given meals out of puzzle toys bowl often had a decrease in boredom, problem behaviors by up to 90%. These behaviors include things like digging, chewing, barking and some hyperactive and anxious behaviors. This is because the puzzle toys provided the dog with an appropriate outlet for this energy and gave them something to do with their time. Having your freezer readily stocked with Kongs, frozen licky mats and keeping a variety of puzzle toys on hand will help go a long way in keeping your dog busy and out of trouble.

Stuffed Kong - Make sure that you use dog safe foods when stuffing your Kong.



Easy
Stuffed lightly



Medium
Stuffed slightly tighter



Hard
Stuffed tightly

Puzzle feeder toys you may not be familiar with are things like slow feeders, treat dispensing toys and stationary food puzzles.

Slow Feeder Bowls (various designs)



Outward Hound Fun Feeder



Paw5 Rock 'n Bowl

Treat-dispensing Toys

Difficulty: Variable – may be adjustable



OurPets IQ Treat Ball



Planet Dog Orbee
Tuff Eggplant



PetSafe Busy Buddies

Stationary Food Puzzles



CleverPet Hub



Nina Ottosson's
Interactive Dog Toy



Snufflemat

Type of puzzle feeder toys

There are three different categories of puzzle toy, each with their own challenges and mental stimulation benefits. Each type of puzzle toy is going to activate different parts of the brain, so it's recommended to use multiple styles of puzzle toy to get the greatest benefit for your dog.

Foraging Toys

These kinds of toys rely on the nose and dog's sense of smell to forage and find the food. Snuffle mats are among the most popular variation of foraging toy and are readily available and easy to make if your crafty. Simply tossing treats into a cardboard box and then putting empty paper towel tubes and other small cardboard boxes on top can be an inexpensive foraging toy.

Hunting Toys

Some dogs have a stronger prey drive than others, but the majority of dogs enjoy a good hunt. Hunting toys stimulation those instincts either threw a chance game, or by knocking an active toy around and finding the food that's been left behind the the activity. Wobble Kongs, Buster Cubes and other moving treat dispenser toys fall into this category.

Cognitive Problem Solving Toys

These toys are designs to get your dog to think and problem solve. They often require the dog to push buttons, pull levers, and nudge things in order to discover the treats hidden within the toy. They come in a variety of difficulty levels and a lot of companies such as the Nina Ottoson toys will even label the level of difficulty for each toy. I have seen some dogs figure out a level three toy and not a level one. So if a toy seems too hard for your dog, don't be discouraged. Simply put it away and try a different toy and as your dog gets better at the problem-solving, you can bring the old toy back out once in a while and let your dog give it a try.