

Keeping your dog mentally stimulated is just as important as providing them with regular exercise. Out in the wild dogs are scavengers, faced with countless challenges when looking for food and water. In our homes we tend to provide our dogs with everything they need, and they don't get to use their brains as much unless we set tasks for them. Enriching your dog's life will increase their wellbeing, improve your bond, and keep them from becoming bored – which will keep them out of mischief!

### TIPS



Make sure to supervise your dog which each new enrichment item in order to keep them safe and prevent them from ingesting pieces.



Training and interactive play are also great ways to enrich your dog's life and strengthen the bond you have!



### ADVICE

#### Food enrichment

- **Scatter feed:** Dogs are scavengers by nature. Instead of serving their dinner in a bowl, next time just take the whole portion and scatter it in your backyard, getting them to sniff out the bits and pieces.
- **Kongs:** Kongs are durable rubber toys that can be stuffed with food, treats, paste and small amounts of peanut butter, and will keep your dog occupied for extended periods of time. If your dog has never used a kong before, you may have to teach them how to use it. Start by smearing paste or peanut butter on the outside for your dog to lick off. Then place a few high value treats inside, that will easily fall out when your dog moves the kong. Over time you will be able to pack your dog's kong more densely, occupying them for longer. In summer, you can freeze your dog's kong, which will increase the challenge and keep your dog cool.
- **Treats in a bottle:** Punch some holes into an empty water or milk bottle, and place some dry food and treats inside. Your dog will have to move the bottle around in order to make the food fall out.
- **Box/paper roll puzzle:** Fill an empty box with a few scattered treats. You can poke holes into the box and have treats sticking out, you can add a favorite toy, and you can smear the outside of the box with paste or peanut butter to make it more attractive.  
Close the box and get your dog to rip it up in order to reach the treasures inside. Instead of a box you can also use a toilet paper roll, close off the ends and stuff it with treats and treasures.

- **Treats wadded up in paper:** Source some scrap paper and place 4-5 small treats or kibble in the center of a sheet. Scrunch up the first sheet with the treats inside and scrunch another sheet over the top, maybe adding treats to this layer as well.
- You can repeat this process multiple times. You can then throw the resulting paper ball for your dog and get them to uncover all the layers in order to reach the treats.

### Olfactory enrichment

- **Scents:** Scatter some spices on a blanket or spray a piece of cloth with a small amount of essential oil (e.g. lavender) for your dog to experience a new smell.

### TIP



*Make sure to vary the kinds of enrichment you use, to keep things interesting for your dog. It may be beneficial to keep a record of which kinds of enrichment were especially successful.*

### Visual enrichment

- **Bubbles:** Blowing bubbles can be an interesting visual stimulus for your dog. Be wary of your dog's body language however, some will love this activity, whereas others may be more cautious or scared.

### Auditory enrichment

- **Music:** Most dogs find quiet classical music relaxing. There are even CDs and playlists available that are specifically designed for dogs and can have a calming effect. Also, leaving the radio, an audiobook or the TV on softly when your dog is left alone may give the impression of company, especially when your dog finds it hard to be alone.



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### More questions? Need help?

Email our professional behaviour trainers on  
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