



DOGS: PROVIDING ENRICHMENT AT HOME

ENRICHMENT

To burn energy and prevent problems caused by boredom, provide your dog with mental stimulation, which includes the following options:

Scavenging Fun

Did you know that dogs are scavengers by nature? That means that they normally would spend most of their energy looking for small bits of food. By giving them opportunities to scavenge, you keep them busy and burn energy at the same time.

Puzzle Toys

You don't have to feed your dog from a bowl twice a day. In fact, it's better to feed meals from puzzle toys that require your dog to work to get each piece of food. These are some popular types of food toys:

- Kong™ Wobbler
- Kong™
- Buster Cube
- West Paw Toppl™
- IQ Treat Ball
- Nina Ottoson puzzle feeders

Snuffle Mats have become popular with dog owners. You can search online for how to make these inexpensive feeding puzzles out of a kitchen sink mat and strips of fleece!

Sniff Walks VS Regular Walks

Your dog's walk is the only time of day he or she gets to explore new things! Allow your dog to take in the smells, rather than hurrying them along. If your dog's walk is your exercise, too, mix it up with regular walking and sniff breaks.

Scent Games

Hide treats (or meals) throughout the house, and then send your dog to find them. For dogs who love fetch, you can hide toys from time to time instead of throwing them. Make it easy, at first, gradually making it more difficult. In a pinch, an easy scent game is to scatter your dog's dry food over a wide area, like the patio, yard, or living room. The sport of Canine Nosework is gaining popularity, as it is something dogs of all breeds can excel at! Visit www.nacsw.net for information. You don't have to be a competitive person to enjoy it - what you learn in a class can be applied for fun at home!

Training

Positive reinforcement training provides LOADS of mental stimulation. Dog owners always report how pooped their dog is after a training lesson. Bonus: your dog will be tired and better behaved! Short training sessions of 15 minutes or less – or even three 5-minute sessions are beneficial.

EXERCISE

Exercise should be provided through a variety of activities. A combination of walks with you, off-leash play (when possible), and fetch (if that's their thing) is ideal.

Healthy exercise allows your dog to set the pace and take breaks as often as needed. Never push your dog to the point of exhaustion!

Keep the following tips in mind when exercising your dog:

- Even though dogs are natural athletes, they still need to work up to walking or running long distances, just like people. If they stop, they have a reason, don't force them.
- If your dog has an orthopedic condition that causes pain, talk to their vet about appropriate forms of exercise.
- Extra care must be taken with brachycephalic (very short muzzles) dogs as they are not tolerant of heat or extended exertion.
- Dogs under 18 months old should not run, bike, or engage in other extended high-impact activities until they have been cleared by a vet to prevent the risk of long-term injury.

REST

Even the most high-energy breeds need to rest. Sleep-deprivation can result in irritability and reactivity, just like us! Your dog needs around 12 hours of rest per day (more for senior dogs).

Dogs that stay in the yard all day or "patrol" from front windows and gates often suffer from sleep deprivation, as they are constantly alerted to people passing by. Give your dog a quiet rest area during the day where they can't see the sidewalk or street.

- Close blinds or keep your dog in an area of the house away from front windows.
- Use white noise machines (or streaming video) to cover outside noises.
- See the "Crate Training" handout for additional tips

If your dog goes to daycare every day, consider giving them a "day off" in the middle of the week, if possible. If they need a mid-day break, consider a pet-sitter who can stop by, but keep activity limited.

SUMMARY

By providing your dog with a balance of exercise, rest, and enrichment, you will see fewer problems. A well-balanced dog is a good dog!