

A close-up photograph of a dog's head and front paws resting on a wooden floor. The dog is looking towards the camera. To the left of the dog is a large, red, cone-shaped Kong toy with a heart-shaped hole. The background is slightly blurred, showing a metal wire crate.

WHAT DOES YOUR DOG WANT?

ENRICHMENT NOW!

QUICK, EASY AND EFFECTIVE SOLUTIONS
FOR BUSY DOGS AND THEIR BUSY PEOPLE.

★ **GOOD HUMAN** ★

* PEOPLE TRAINING FOR DOGS *

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WHY'D YOU DO IT, THORNBURG?

- If you have ever raised a kid with dogs you know you have to find things to keep them all busy or it can quickly get pretty ugly. Even for a dog trainer. I raised one little girl with 3 big dogs so I feel like a damn expert on the subject of enrichment.
- I owned a pet sitting & dog walking company for many years and learned some pretty great enrichment hacks from clients and out of necessity. It's time I shared them all in one place.
- I've volunteered and worked in shelters and enrichment is my special interest. This is where even small activities make the most impact. Enrichment Now! For every dog, in every shelter.
- The dogs of my heart have always been the ones who needed extra care in some way. I found I could care for them best when I saw them wholly and individually. Addressing their needs always came down to adding things that would enrich their lives.

This guide is dedicated to my dogs, your dogs and all of the dogs still waiting for a home.

ABOUT THIS BOOK

Many of the enrichment activities are loosely categorized. Some may actually fit better into another category. I tried to choose the most important function of the activity for classification. I stopped moving things around towards the end. Self-editing with a kid home full-time is truly beyond my skill set.

I noted some of my favorite activities with a star. ★

It doesn't mean those activities are necessarily the best choices for your dogs and family. The goal of this guide is to encourage you to come up with your own plan for enrichment by looking at the dog in front of you with fresh eyes and some new information. I hope I have provided solid info which helps you do that. If you need more help, get in touch!

Jennifer Thornburg, CPDT-KA, KPA CTP

➔ Disclaimer: Things change all the time and dog toys are not regulated. My recommendations are based on my personal experiences and not a fancy blind study of a hundred dogs. Any activity, food or product proposed should be used at your own risk and those risks should be assessed based on your individual dog. Look, I'm not a vet, I'm just a decent human who has struggled to meet my dogs' needs through all the stages of their lives. I hope my struggle benefits you. But, if it doesn't, I am not responsible.

TL:DR. Use common sense. If you think your dog may eat the toy, don't leave them with the toy.

➔ Every individual reacts differently to different activities. I recommend trying one at a time for several days and seeing how your dog responds. If there's an adverse reaction stop immediately.

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DEFINING ENRICHMENT

As humans, we lead stressful lives. We all know that de-stressing is a process. Just an hour of relaxing won't keep you calm, cool, and collected for the rest of your life. You need consistent breaks and things to occupy your time and your mind. Dogs are the same way. Dogs need more than a 15-minute stand alone enrichment activity but how do we fit it in to our busy lives?

(The answer is: we have to work smarter, not harder!)

Modern living doesn't leave much room for dogs to do dog things. We must be intentional about providing our dogs with the stimulation they require. Our responsibility as owners is to seek out and provide those opportunities. And we've never had more choices than we do today!

"An enriched environment is interesting, allows animals to perform natural behaviors, permits them to be more active and increases the animals' control over their environment. Enrichment helps satisfy both the physical and psychological needs of animals and allows them to make choices."

— *The Saint Louis Zoo*

Benefits of Enrichment

- gives a feeling of fulfillment and satisfaction
- reduces boredom-related behavior problems
- stimulates and assists in brain growth
- increases intelligence and problem solving abilities
- builds confidence and social skills
- allows dogs to be dogs and do dog things
- creates a more balanced and happy dog
- weight loss in dogs who actively work for their meals
- increased focus and concentration
- builds a stronger bond through interactive play
- protects against age-associated cognitive decline and dementia

ELEMENTS OF ENRICHMENT

• enriching

Enrichment is what happens as a result of what you do for your dog. Just giving a dog a food-dispensing toy doesn't necessarily equate to enrichment. We can't ask the dog 'Are you enriched?' and get an answer. We can only really know if enrichment has occurred once we have witnessed changes in the dog's behavior.

• goal oriented

This guide is designed to make sure your dog gets to dog (verb) more, which will lead to improvements in lots of areas of behavior. Your main goals are to promote desirable behaviors and reduce stress. More specific goals will reveal themselves as you continue reading.

• individualized

Dogs have distinctly individual preferences, depending on the day, time, and situation. If your dog seems disinterested in a particular enrichment item, try something different. Spend some time identifying things that your dog finds motivating or reinforcing.

• choice and control

Dogs get to decide how they interact with enrichment, with the things happening around them in their world. Enrichment can help them to learn that their behavior works to get the things they like and avoid things they don't like. That's confidence-building and stress-busting! Our job is to make sure they are safe.

• species typical

The enrichment dogs benefit most from are those that appeal to their inherent dogginess. Species and breed-typical requirements for dogs include social contact, a resting space, functional spaces, mental and physical exercise, and novel experiences to explore.

• variety and novelty

The same enrichment every day can lead to boredom. Over a range of items and experiences, rotate their use and levels of complexity to prevent predictability and reduce habituation. Just like I once loved blue cheese but no longer care for it, choices and preferences can change.

The Enrichment Connection

- Tugging on a toy is much like pulling a prey animal from a burrow or winning a carcass from another dog.
 - Dogs dig to make a cool spot to lie, or to hide something important to them.
 - Trailing is how dogs use their nose to track prey.
 - Dogs roam to explore, find a mate, find other dogs to play with, find food.
 - Socializing and playing with humans and other dogs is rewarding for dogs.
 - Shredding a stuffed toy imitates eviscerating a furry animal corpse.
 - Chasing a toy activates the same part of the brain as chasing a rabbit.
 - Barking communicates all sorts of things. It's a dog thing.
 - Dogs chew to strengthen jaws, pre-digest food and because it feels good.
-

📌 Crepuscular Creatures

You may have noticed that your dog is more energetic in the mornings and around dinnertime. Domestic dogs have evolved from predatory ancestors and are more active at dawn and dusk. This is common in predators because prey species are more abundant at dawn and dusk. Understanding your dog's instinctive schedule is important for maximizing the effect of exercise and enrichment activities.

How to enrich your dog's life.

Start here! Learning more about your dog, both as a species and as an individual, will direct you to best meet their needs which, in turn, will make them a little easier to live with. I hope this guide allows you to see the skilled, social survivor within your dog who needs to be enriched.

Yes, even that 8 pound Yorkie.



PHYSICAL EXERCISE

Exercise is essential, regardless of the species. Physical activity stimulates the production of serotonin in the brain, which can help relax a dog (or human). Ideally, a young, healthy dog should have a minimum of 20-30 minutes of daily aerobic exercise.

Get moving!

There is obvious value in a brisk good walk or run with your dog. Taking an off-territory walk each day will help keep your dog physically fit and give them opportunities to explore the world. Not all dogs are built for running, but most dogs in good health need about half an hour of physical activity a day. Consider your dog's health, age, breed and preferences when planning physical exercise. More is not necessarily better when it comes to exercise. Over time, the dog can become a super athlete in peak physical condition, requiring more and more exercise to wear them out.



⚠ Some activities, such as prolonged ball and Frisbee fetching or uninterrupted play in dog parks or doggy daycares, actually increase arousal and stress. (Like playing all your favorite songs but at too loud of a volume all day.) If your dog seems more charged up after the physical exercise than before, try increasing mental enrichment.

★ **Decompression Walks**

[Sarah Stremming](#) defines a decompression walk as “a walk where the dog is allowed freedom of movement in nature.” This can be done off-leash or on a long line with a back clipping harness. Think of woods, trails, parks, fields, beaches, or any area that is away from traffic and the noises of the city. The goal of this walk is to give your dog an opportunity to be a dog in a stress-free and unstructured environment.

★ If you don't have the right spot nearby, check out [SniffSpot](#) which is basically airbnb for off-leash dog areas.

★ Leash Manners

Teach your dog to walk on a loose leash. Dogs with nice leash manners are likely to get walked more often, which is enriching for both human and dog! ([Contact Good Human for help!](#))

★ Dog Sports

There are all kinds of organized sports and activities that you can do with your dog. If you are into sports, there is truly something out there for you and your pal! Which sport is right for your dog? [The American Kennel Club](#) is a great place to start.

★ Swimming

Swimming is one of the best types of exercise for a dog. It's a great way to tire dogs out and it's easier on their joints. Ensure that your local watering hole allows dogs and is safe for swimming. Use a lifejacket for your dog to stay safe!

Can you dig it?

Give your dog an area where digging is allowed such as a sandbox. Hide toys or other fun things in the sand for your dog to dig up and find. Give your dog a chance to potty before starting sandbox time to reduce the chances of the box becoming a toilet

Quality play is important.

Play physical games like Tug of War, Fetch and Frisbee with your dog. Learning how to play with your dog in ways that are enjoyable and safe for you both will greatly enhance your relationship.

2-Ball Fetch

During a game of fetch, many dogs, enjoy some "catch-me-if-you can" and won't drop the ball so you can throw it again. In this case you need two balls so you always have one to throw. Maybe over time you can teach your dog to drop the ball to continue the game, but in the meantime, just throw the other ball.

📌 Playing fetch in tall grass adds a foraging element to the game.

⚠️ Tennis balls can be a choking risk for dogs large enough for the ball to become lodged in their trachea. Dogs who have big ball feelings may develop worn teeth from catching and chewing on tennis balls.

Flirt Poles

A flirt pole is basically a wand toy for dogs. It's a great way to get some energy out while providing your dog with the thrill of the chase and the satisfaction of the catch and grab. My favorite flirt pole is the [Squishy Face Studio](#) brand.

RULES OF THE GAME

Flirt Poles and Tug Toys

The rules are simple but they are essential. These games can be used not only as play, but as an important part of training. In fact, they give you a built in way to teach the following:

- Take It/Drop It
 - Leave it
 - Self-control
 - Trust and Focus
 - Boundaries
 - How to play!
- The toy is yours. Not all toys, and certainly not socks, are tug toys. Have one or two special tug toys. They stay on a shelf or in a cupboard, not on the floor.
 - Tug starts on cue. Dog must sit or lie down, look at you, leave the toy alone, and wait for an invitation to play tug. The tug game doesn't start until you say it starts. I use "Gittit!"
 - Let your dog interact with the toy the way it was intended: chase and catch for a flirt pole, tug for tug toy.
 - Occasionally ask them to "Drop It" and offer your dog a treat in exchange for the toy. When they give it up, return to Step 1 and ask the dog to "Wait" until you invite more play. Teach "Give It" using positive reinforcement methods.
 - Dog teeth on human skin ends the game. If there are any dog teeth on human skin, accident or no, just drop the toy and walk away. This doesn't work if your dog then spends 5 minutes tossing the toy about and gloating about his prize. But most dogs find the tug toy boring if you're not attached to it.
 - That's it! It doesn't matter who initiates play or who wins. There's just one last really important rule: Have fun with your dog!

Does toy play encourage dominance?

No. Nope. But it can encourage arousal, which is something different. Our [understanding of dominance theory](#) and the behavior of domesticated animals has grown and our views have changed in the last two decades ([with a few unfortunate exceptions](#)).

"The dog's social structure has been referred to as a pack hierarchy, but this does not accurately or entirely describe the relationship of dogs with other dogs or with people.

The term dominance...is a relative term established by the value of the resource to each individual and the cumulative effects of learning."

—*Merck Veterinary Manual*

Priority access to resources is not a major concern in our relationship with our dogs. The majority of behaviors pet dog owners want to modify are not related to resources and may not even involve aggression. These behaviors occur because they have been inadvertently reinforced and appropriate behaviors have not been trained instead.

⚠ Say no to laser pointers.

Dogs with hunting, tracking, or herding tendencies are especially susceptible to light obsession. Playing with the laser pointer stimulates those natural traits that come from years of breeding. This can create a frustrated dog who obsesses over lights, shadows and reflections. Find an alternative activity that allows your dog to catch the prey.

What about puppies?

Puppies need a full year of bone development before any high-impact physical exercise. Any earlier and you can risk serious injury to a growth plate. This may result in a misshapen or shortened limb which can make the puppy more prone to injuries as they grow.

What about seniors?

Regular low-impact exercise is even more important for senior dogs because it helps keep their joints moving along with enrichment. If you think your dog would experience too much pain to go on a casual 30-minute walk, talk to your veterinarian about exercise limitations, pain medication and other treatments.

LET THEM CHEW!

All dogs need to chew, regardless of age. Both wild and domestic dogs spend hours chewing to keep their jaws strong and teeth clean. They also chew for fun, for stimulation, for social interaction and to relieve anxiety. Ever watched your dog settle down with a bone in the evening? Think of it as an evening cocktail for dogs. Providing your dog with plenty of their own preferred toys and chews will help to prevent chewing on your things. Truth. [ASPCA Position Statement on Dog Chews/Treats](#).



Chew Toys

[Nylabones](#) and similar chews, [Benebones](#), hard rubber toys. [GoughNuts](#) are very sturdy toys for tough chewers and some models have a colorized safety system so you can quickly identify when chews need to be replaced. [Busy Buddy](#) toys are durable chew toys. [Orbee](#) toys are tough chews. [Playology](#) offers lots of tough chew toys that are scented to increase engagement.

📌 It's worth the money to get appropriate-sized items for your dog rather than risk them choking.

Rope Toys

Lots of dogs like to chew on rope toys but for some, these can be risky in terms of ingesting large chunks of rope strands. Stick to fleece and clean often.

★ Coffeewood Chews

These are made from the branches of the coffee tree. They are sustainably harvested through the the natural pruning process farmers do to maintain the highest levels of coffee production possible on their farms. The fibers that come from coffeewood can be swallowed and digested without any harm to your dog.

⚠️ If your coffeewood chew makes it to the yard, it looks just like a regular stick.

Animal Parts

You can find a number of these on shelves now: [bully sticks](#), beef tracheas, pig ears and snouts, chicken feet. Any part, really. Dogs like them, but some are super stinky and skeezy to us humans. Of these, I prefer [antlers](#), [100% beef hide rolls](#), and [Himalayan Yak Milk chews](#).

📌 Most dogs feel fully satisfied (endorphins get released in the brain) after short sessions of back-of-the-jaw gnawing. After chewing, store the chew out of sight and use it when your dog needs more chew time!

⚠️ Weight bearing bones and hooves are very hard and may cause tooth fractures in intense chewers. No cooked bones, ever. Cooked bones will shard and splinter and may cause injuries to the mouth and perforations to the gastrointestinal system.

⚠️ Meat jerky treats have had more recalls than any other dog food item. Chew at your own dog's risk.

⚠️ Bully sticks contain a lot of calories and can cause an upset stomach in many dogs.

📌 [Dried sweet potatoes](#) are an excellent and very nutritious alternative to meat jerky. Downside is that they do not last very long.

📌 There are lots of opposing views about rawhides. I do allow my dogs to have some less risky rawhide products ([C.E.T. Enzymatic Oral Hygiene Chews](#)). Be careful to find an appropriate size and shape and always supervise.

📌 Bucks drop their racks every winter. Dogs can be trained to sniff out those antlers. (And that's about as much as I know on the topic.)

Frozen Foods

- Frozen broccoli stalks last a surprising long time, are nutritious and clean your dog's teeth as they chew (green tops may cause gastro issues).
- Carrots too, of course.
- Frozen melon balls (hold the prosciutto
- Biscuits frozen in water or diluted broth and offer to pup on a tile floor or outside.
- Frozen, peeled, hard boiled eggs. They fit perfect in the large kong and the [Zogoflex!](#)
- Raw bones, bought frozen.

Dental Chews

Years ago, compressed dental chews made the news as the cause of bowel obstruction. These chews have been reformulated and are now 85% digestible, which is better than quality kibble. Not much bang for your buck, though- they don't last very long.

I had a dog who loved [Greenies](#) and I made sure to always have them for him.

📌 Still uneasy about giving your dog a compressed dental chew? An online source recommends putting the dental chew in a glass of water and see if it dissolves by the next day. If so, then you can be assured that it is safe for your dog to swallow.

Puppy Chewing.

I believe in giving puppies lots and lots and lots of delicious chew options. The more appropriate items they have, the less they will seek out antique furniture. Get a variety and find out what your pup likes, then get more of those. Yak milk chews and frozen kongs got my dog (and my hands) through puppyhood. Puppies are working on teeth for six months and need to chew to relieve their aching gums. A frozen kong, washcloth or [Chilly Bone](#) helps to bring relief for many puppies.

Senior Chewing.

It's important to select items that are smaller and not too hard for sensitive teeth or gums. Avoid rich foods and unwanted additives that can be difficult on an aging system. Because many dogs have reduced senses in their old age, it's a good idea to look for dog toys that are brightly colored, scented, noisy (squeakers, crinkly, whistling) or flavored.

⚠️ Be sure to give your dog access to water- chewing sure makes a pup thirsty!

FORAGING



DOG:\>start forage.sniff

Our domestic dogs don't need to forage like their ancestors. But their internal hard drive is still running that program.

Give your dog an opportunity to satisfy their natural urge to hunt, chew, problem-solve, and play.

Foraging for food can help develop the frontal cortex of the brain – that's the part responsible for good decision making.

Ditch the Bowl pt 1

Dogs naturally forage for food. What do foragers do for most of the day? They sniff and walk around looking for food they can eat, likely eating small amounts throughout the day. Our own dogs are foraging when they counter-surf, pre-wash our dishes, clean crumbs from the floor or go through the trash can. Foraging is a fundamental need for dogs which makes it an effective form of enrichment. Come up with some foraging activities or your dog will find their own.

Slow Feeder

Slow feeders are not enrichment, exactly. Your dog wants to eat quickly and the bowl simply slows him down, which can be frustrating to the dog. But there are many occasions in which they are necessary.

There are loads of these out there and I'm not sure one is better than the rest. I prefer a shorter one like [Outward Hound's Fun Feeder](#) that fits in the freezer so you have the option to freeze the whole shebang.

★ Kibble Scatter

One of the simplest but most enjoyable foraging activities to do with your dog is to take their regular kibble and scatter in the grass in your backyard. It takes just a few seconds for you to do, but provides them with a foraging activity in a more natural environment.

Kibble Burrito

For the laziest/smartest of us! Lay a towel out flat. Poor some kibble down the middle longwise. Fold the towel in half at the kibble line. Spread more kibble all around. Roll the towel from one end so all the food is hidden in the towel roll. You may need to leave a few pieces of food sticking out to encourage your dog to explore. Make it harder by rolling the towel more tightly or add a few smaller kibble towel rolls inside.

Toy Box Delight

Throw some dry treats in the toy box to surprise your dog next time they go digging around for the next toy.

Ball Pit

Big old bag of Phthalate-free, BPA-free crush-proof, plastic balls + kiddie pool + treats = big fun for your dog. Your dog must use their nose to sniff out the treats. Spoiler alert: those balls are not actually crush-proof. You could use clean plastic bottles too.

Rip and Tear!

Destructive activities are super satisfying for lots of dogs, but seem especially so for terriers and other high-intensity types. When using cardboard or paper products, fill them with hard treats only (don't smear anything on the box itself), and keep a close eye on the dog to ensure they're not ingesting inedible material.

- **Beginner:** Toss some treats in a lightweight cardboard box and close it up. If a dog is hesitant, try cutting some little holes in the sides to give them an easier starting point.
- **Advanced:** Use a larger box plus several smaller boxes. Place treats in layers of paper, put them in the smaller boxes, then but the smaller boxes in the big box.

Use your trash!

- newspaper
- toilet paper and paper towel rolls
- empty tissue boxes
- granola bar, cereal, and similar cardboard boxes
- cardboard egg cartons
- take out beverage holders, etc.
- all those Amazon boxes!
- take-out boxes smell delicious!

★Every Day I'm Snuffelin'

Snuffle Mats are similar to rubberized bathroom mats but with extra long carpet fibers. Dogs have to move their noses around between the fibers to find their kibble pieces for the meal. Foraging has never been so convenient!
Paw5 is my favorite.



📌 If your dog picks up the snuffle mat, try putting it in an open cardboard box.

Activity Mat

Similar to a snuffle mat, but instead of long fibers, it has pockets and folds. It looks like a Baby Einstein mat for human babies than something for your dog. Potato, potahto. See also, [Pickpocket Foragers](#). (Why am I not making these?)

⚠️ Do not leave your dog alone with a snuffle or activity mat if they are an aggressive chewer or prone to ingesting non-food items.

Easter Egg Hunt

Save those [plastic easter eggs](#) with the holes in them. Perfect for hiding treats for your dog to find! Be sure to get the egg back before they get cronched!

FOOD ENRICHMENT



Food toys are the go-to suggestion for mental stimulation with good reason. They are easy to use for effective enrichment!

Provide interactive toys that dispense food and require your dog to work for their meals

Minimum effort, maximum results!

Ditch the Bowl pt. 2

Dogs prefer to work for their food and treats ([contrafreeloading](#).) If you don't have time to train with your dog and still want the added benefit of providing mental enrichment for your dog while you are busy, use food dispensing and interactive dog toys and not your dog's food bowl.

Where's the food?

If you are unable to purchase a food puzzle toy or a slow feeder bowl, you can simply use multiple bowls of any kind. Divide your dog's regular meal into several small portions and "hide" them around the house for them to find. To make things more challenging, place blankets, pillow cases, sheets, or old t-shirts on top.

The Kong. The OG of food enrichment.

All dogs should have at least 2 kongs. Make sure you choose a kong that is appropriate to the size of your dog and the strength of their jaws. **Grey** (new!) and **Black** kongs are best for big chewers, followed by **Blue**, the standard **Red** and a **Purple** (new!) for seniors. You can smear some peanut butter inside for a quick treat, or pop a large dog biscuit inside and allow your dog to hunt for their food. They are great for packing wet food, meat, veggies and dog-safe leftovers into and allowing your dog to work hard to get it out. For dogs that are super quick, try freezing a stuffed kong.

📌 The Kong got that name for its resemblance to a King Kong earplug!

The Anatomy of a Stuffed Kong.

The Popular 4-Layer Method.



The little hole.

Stuff it with any dry treat.

The top bit.

This is a great place for kibble or treats. No wet food this far up or your dog may give up because it's too hard to get out.

The middle part.

This is where the gooey stuff goes- wet dog food.
This is what it's all about!

The last part.

Peanut butter works well here to seal it up and keep things neat. You can add another treat to get the pup interested.

Now freeze it.

You've just made your dog's day.

What's Inside?

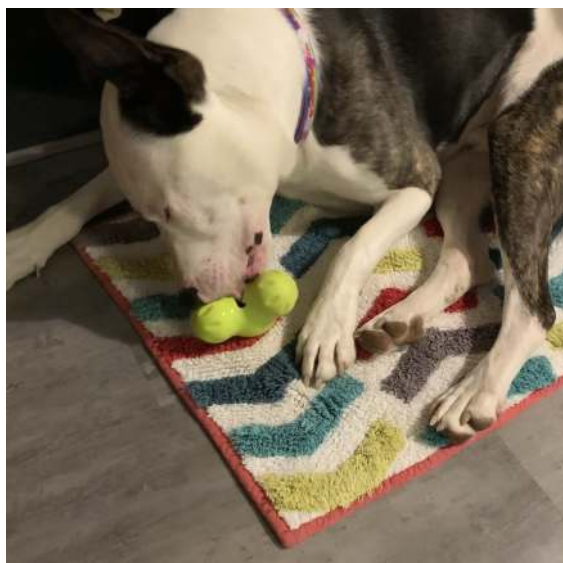
Peanut Butter, Baby Food, Eggs, Canned Pumpkin, Premium Canned Dog Food, Cottage Cheese, Cream Cheese, Plain Yogurt, Liver Pate, Cheese Whiz, Dog Treats, Cheerios, Cheese, Cold Cuts, Croutons, Liver (freeze-dried), Pizza Crusts, Beef Jerky, Cooked Rice, Oatmeal, Crackers, Hard Biscuits, Unsalted Peanuts, Yogurt, Salmon, Steak (no fat), Chicken, Turkey (no bones), Apples, Unsweetened Apple Sauce, Apricots, Banana, Blueberries, Cranberries, Melon, Peaches, Strawberries, Dried Fruit (any listed here), Asparagus, Broccoli, Brussel Sprouts, Cabbage, Celery, Carrots, Cauliflower, Green Beans, Kale, Peas, Spinach, Mashed Potato, Sweet Potato, Zucchini, Mint, Parsley.

⚠ A word about peanut butter.

I use peanut butter less and less often for food enrichment.

I am concerned about Xylitol, which is a common additive to peanut butter and can be fatal to dogs. Also, peanut butter takes longer to freeze than other fillers.

📌 Dogs basically have taste receptors for salty, sweet, bitter, sour and umami, just like humans. However, they have fewer taste buds and perceive sweet and salty tastes a bit differently than we do.



Tried and True Food Toys

[Barnacle](#), [Buster Cube](#), [Green Feeder](#), [Buster Maze](#), [Twist 'n Treat](#), [Magic Mushroom](#), [Tricky Treat Ball](#), [Tug-a-Jug](#), [Busy Buddy Jack Dog Toy](#), [Pickle Pocket](#), [Genius Mike](#), [Genius Leo](#), [Zogoflex Toys](#) (The large size and the small size can connect to make it more challenging, or with just one, you can freeze various foods inside.) [Monster Mouth](#), [Monster Ball](#).

← Here is my dog, Moon Pie, with his [Zogoflex Tux Tough Treat Toy](#).

📌 When your dog's food toys get gross, throw them in the washing machine on gentle cycle or top shelf of the dishwasher and make sure to rinse them well.

Kong Wobbler

This toy looks like the original red Kong but larger and it unscrews to allow you to put entire meals inside. It's an excellent kibble dispensing toy to use a meal times. If you feed your dog kibble, there's no reason to give it away for free in a bowl. We use the Kong Wobbler every day.

★ Treat Bomb

My favorite and possibly the best food toy: paper towel or toilet paper cardboard tubes. Throw treats in, close off the ends and toss it to your pup. Super fast and easy, big fun and minimal clean up.

PVC Pipe Toy

For the more determined dogs, cut the piping to about 12 inches, drill some random holes (large enough for your kibble), put end pieces on both ends, and you're done! Your dog has to nose it around to get the kibble to fall out.

Ye Old Tennis Ball

Those worn out old tennis balls can be turned into puzzles. Just cut an X into the ball or cut along the seam to make a flap. Stuff some kibble inside and let them go for it!

↑ Not for aggressive chewers. Make sure the ball stays large enough that your dog can't swallow it.

Water Jug Breakfast

Take a rinsed and dried milk jug or similar. Add the dogs kibble and leave the lid off. Let the dog figure out how to get that food. Definitely not quiet. The

Frozen Treats

Frozen treats are popular all year round but especially during the hotter months. I use ice trays, gelatin molds, popsicle molds, silicone molds or just any old thing. Try these: Gatorade popsicle, stuffed kongs, bananas, apples, pumpkin, buckets filled with treats/bones/toys, filled raw bones, [puppy milk](#), vegetable stock blocks.

📌 Most silicone baby food storage containers are perfect for freezing kong stuffings. They stack nicely in the freezer and are faster than stuffing kongs. I have the [WeeSprout](#) brand and I also use them for making egg bites in the Instapot.

★ [The Hol-ee Roller](#)

I love this ingenious holey ball. It can be squished, bounced, and tugged and it will snap back into shape. Purchase this holey ball from your pet store or Amazon. Seriously, get one of these. Get creative and let me know what you come up with! Here are some things I do with the Hol-ee Roller.

- Wrap treats in clean cloths (I use my kids old baby washcloths). Push the cloths into the Hol-ee Roller. Your dog will get the satisfaction from "de-stuffing" a toy without the destruction!
- Play fetch. It's easy for humans to throw and easy for dogs to pick up.
- Cut up fruits or veggies to the size of the holes and throw them in.
- Throw in a Dental Stick or other treat that the dog has to work to get.
- Purchase a [Bungee Handle](#) and make it a tug toy.

FOOD ENRICHMENT FAQ

Is that food toy frustrating for your pup?

Then that's the opposite of enrichment. I have seen so many people put a food toy down or throw a kong in a crate and the dog has no idea what to do with it and nothing changes. Some toys require behaviors such as licking, chewing, pushing with the nose, picking up, carrying, dropping, shaking, batting or securing the toy with the paws. If your dog has never seen a toy like this, they may not know how to engage with it or even why. Some dogs are great problem solvers (especially when it comes to food!) but some are not and need to be trained to interact with the toy in the way that will create enrichment (instead of frustration!).

Your dog should always be winning.

How do you train your dog to interact with toys?

Baby steps. Introduce the toy to your dog by placing it on the floor (empty). Let your dog sniff it and investigate. Reward your dog for showing interest by giving them a few treats scattered around the toy. Move the toy around with your hand to show your dog what it looks like when it's moving. If possible, make it easier for them until they get the hang of it. If all else fails, you can always try again next mealtime (but feed your dog).

Is this something my dog can do while I'm not home?

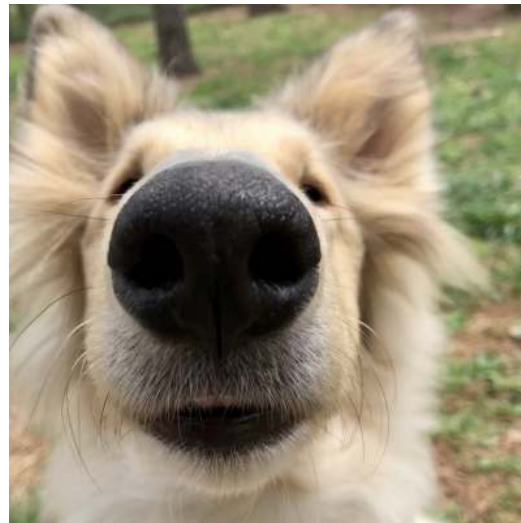
No object or toy is 100% safe. If you plan to leave your dog with it, try to supervise them with it many times to make sure they are interacting with it safely. Remember, all toys are meant to be supervised.

What about multi-dog households?

If you have multiple dogs in your home, separate them with a gate when using food puzzles to prevent potential conflicts. If the dogs guard resources, don't hesitate to ask for help from a qualified professional trainer (cough). It will take time and attention, and many dogs will always require some level of management for safety and sanity. But, resource guarding is a behavior, and all behavior is modifiable!

THE NOSE KNOWS

Dogs have nearly 300 million scent receptors, compared to our measly 5 million. Additionally, the part of the brain that analyzes smells is 30 times bigger in dogs than humans. They also have something called the vomeronasal organ tucked away in the upper palate which helps them smell things in ways we can't even comprehend.



A human walks into the kitchen and smells spaghetti cooking. But a dog catches a whiff from three houses away and smells tomatoes, basil, oregano, parsley, garlic, onions, mushrooms, olive oil, and most likely a few smells that came in from the grocery store where you purchased the ingredients.

It's no wonder scent games make such effective enrichment. They build confidence in dogs, they give dogs choices, they strengthen your bond with your dog, they teach your dog how to problem solve, they are great for all ages and breeds, and, my favorite, they are exhausting.

Which Hand?

Put a treat in one of your hands as your dog is watching. Close your fists and extend both hands out towards your dog. Ask your dog "which hand?" and wait for them to choose. If they choose the correct hand, praise them and open your fist to give them the treat. If they choose the wrong hand, open them up to show them and try again.

The Old Shoe Game

Line up your shoes from the bottom of the closet. Place treats between the tightly packed shoes for the dog to find. This doesn't encourage the dog to chew your shoes. Actually, the dog is learning to investigate around the shoes, not in them.

Muffin Tin Game

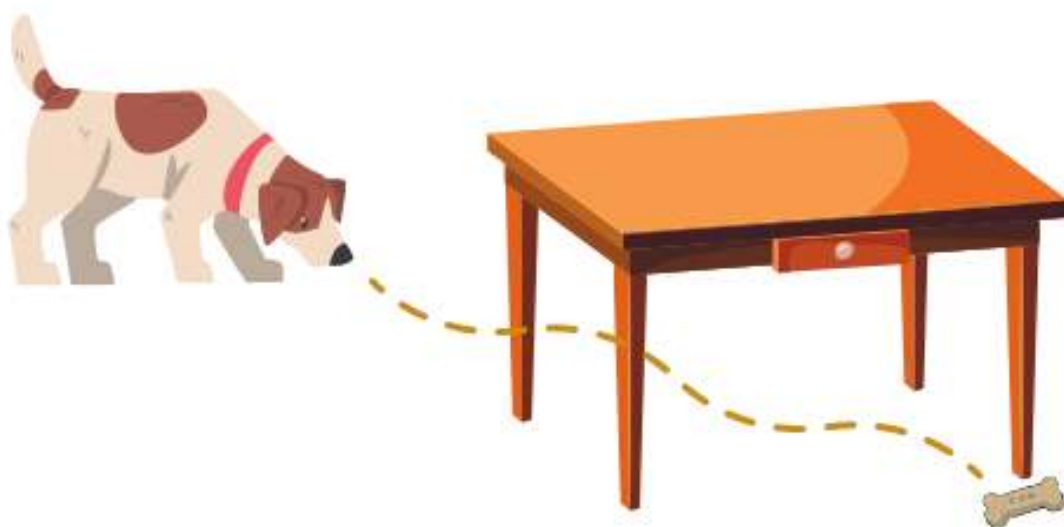
Turn a muffin tin upside down and spread kibble between the bumps. Your dog will have to nudge the food around from all different angles. One thing I love about this is that the top of the tin is flat, so they can't just flip it over. This is good for larger dogs, but for smaller pooches try a mini muffin tin. You can also keep the tin upright and divide the kibble up between the cups. Add difficulty by covering each section with a tennis ball or other toy.

Smelly Toys

Place some of the dog's toys in the clothes hamper so they pick up the scent of their humans.

★ Find It (easy)

To start the game, have your dog stay at a given location. If they do not have a "stay" you may need someone to gently hold a finger in the collar to help them stay until they know the game. While the dog is watching you, go place a bit of food or favorite toy at the other end of the room. When you give the cue to release your dog say "find it." Initially, lots of dogs will use their eyes to find the treat, but most quickly learn to use their noses. After a few repetitions your dog will know what you're expecting. Once your dog seems to know "find it" you can step it up a notch. When first starting out, keep the game centered in one or two rooms. If you're confident that your dog knows the "find it" command it's time to move onto the next step – hiding things around the house. This is a great way to reinforce "go to a mat" and "stay."



Hide & Seek

Here's one that uses you as the treat. Have someone distract your dog while you hide somewhere in the home- in a closet, under a bed, or somewhere your dog wouldn't normally expect you to be. Call the dog then wait. Your dog will inevitably begin searching for you. Once they find you, praise and reward! If you are in a closet and you hear them sniff at the door, you'll know your dog has figured it out. Next, take it outdoors to a dog-friendly, wooded area, preferably with no one else around. Have a friend hold your dog, then walk off into the woods and find cover. Your friend should wait 30 seconds, then say "Where's, (your name)!" and release the dog. Your dog should scoot off with their nose to the ground, searching for you. Within a minute they should find you, at which point you will reward them with a shower of treats! Increase your distance over time until they can find you no matter how far off.

Voila! Now you have a Search & Rescue dog!

What a Klutz! by Suzanne Clothier

This game allows you to show the dog how important their nose is to you. Dogs like to feel useful, and this particular game helps boost a dog's confidence and self importance. As you are walking, discreetly drop an object you have been carrying or held in your pocket. Continue walking for 10-15 steps, then stop as if concerned, patting your pockets and looking around. Here's your chance to really put on a performance! Ask the dog, "Where is it? Can you help? Can you FIND IT?" Begin walking back towards the spot where you dropped the article, encouraging the dog to sniff the ground by pointing and telling him to FIND IT. As you get closer to the object, give the dog a little room so that they can find it on their own. If they need help, try a subtle kick of the object (after all, you are the klutz who dropped it - why not go ahead and trip over it too?) to bring it to your dog's attention while you pretend not to notice. Once the dog finds the item, make a huge deal over this doggy genius who has saved you from dropping an old glove!

↑ Use fabric or leather objects since metal or hard objects do not hold scent as well.

Find your Keys

Use a leather or fabric loop keychain. Put a treat in the loop. Put the keychain on the ground 1 foot away from your dog's nose. Ask your dog to "find it." When your dog approaches the keychain and sniffs it, mark the behavior with a "yes" and feed your dog an additional 5-10 small treats right on top of the keychain. Lift the keychain off the floor. Repeat the exercise at the same distance 5-10 times until your dog takes you to the keychain every time. Then increase the distance where you hide the keychain. After a few sessions, make the hide more difficult. Put the keychain behind a chair, under the table, on a chair. After about 10 sessions hide the keychain without a treat in it. When your dog finds the keychain, give them 10-12 treats as they're sniffing the keychain.

Wildlife Sniffari

Novel animal scents will be super interesting for any dog but especially so for dogs who may not have had the opportunity to encounter other animals. There are a variety of wildlife scents available online such as deer, fox, pheasant and rabbit. Give a friend with a farm or other animals an old tee shirt to rub on an animal. A drop or two of urine would be a bonus. (Not a sentence you hear every day) Outdoor grassy areas are great places to use wildlife scents (because your dog will likely pee on them). Create different scent trails around the yard by dragging a wildlife-scented cloth across the ground in varied patterns. Next, bring your dog out into the yard and let them explore the scent trails at their own pace.

📌 If you have a dog who has a problem chasing wildlife, it's probably best to avoid this game!

📌 Wildlife scents in the yard may decrease the potential for barking or fence-running by providing a more interesting environment.

3-2-1 Find It! by Suzanne Clothier

Use a favorite toy or even just a stick that you come across in the woods. After a few moments of playing with object, hold the dog as you throw the object into grass, brush, woods thick enough to lightly disguise the object. The dog may see and "mark" the fall of the object, but as the difficulty of the game increases, this will only help him define the area he needs to search. Once the object has landed and stopped moving, count to 3 before releasing the dog to "FIND IT." You may gradually increase the time before releasing the dog, and of course, the thickness of the brush or grass (one good reason to avoid mowing your lawn regularly!).

CALMING ENRICHMENT

Calming enrichment activities will take away some of that stress and move your dog away from threshold. I recommend starting these when your dog is already calm so you can pair the technique with calm behavior. Practice frequently so your dog has a lot of experience being calm while doing the activity. This will allow it to work better when your dog is not calm and you need them to be.



Calming Massage

Maintain one hand on your dog at all times to steady them. Avoid sudden motions. Keep it fluid. Using firm but not hard pressure, make sweeping passes along the length of the spine and down the tail. Repeat this several times slowly. You can gradually increase your pressure if your dog likes it. Do not press straight down on the lower part of the back. Use a flat palm to slowly touch all the parts of your dog's body. Focus on how your dog is responding.

Use the Three Second Rule to get your dog's consent. Start with the dog close to you, relaxed but free to leave. If the dog approaches, offer a soft, gentle scratch under the chin or chest. Some dogs will present the body part they would like to have scratched. Count to yourself, one... two... three then slowly move your hand away. Does the dog move closer and ask for more? If so, you may continue. If the dog does not re-engage, give them space. You do not have consent to continue putting your hands on this dog's body.

Get some Zzzs

Your dog should be getting good rest each day. Dogs need about 2x as much as humans, split between nighttime and the middle of the day. If your dog is not sleeping, can they be crated in a quiet area, possibly with something draped over the crate? Soundscapes may keep your dog from noise policing.

[Relax on a Mat](#)

If you teach your dog nothing else during their life, teach this exercise and you will reduce your dog's stress and attention-seeking behaviors by noticeable amounts. This exercise teaches your dog a behavior that will help relax their body, rather than getting excited or demanding when you are not paying attention to them.

[Relaxation Protocol](#)

This protocol is a set of exercises where you systematically teach your dog to relax in a sit or a down, or on a mat and stay calm even when there are "weird" things happening around them. Using food and quiet praise, the dog learns to associate good things with different stimuli. This is my favorite tool for behavior modification.

[Tellington Touch \(TTouch\)](#)

The Tellington TTouch for companion animals was developed by Linda Tellington-Jones in the 1970s. It's based on circular movements of the fingers and hands over the entire body of an animal. TTouch should only be administered by Certified TTouch Practitioners which can be found in the [Practitioner Directory](#).

[★ Free Work Enrichment](#)

Animal Centered Education (ACE) Free Work encourages dogs to engage with a wide variety of textures/surfaces and items at their own pace. This simple, low-impact activity is suitable for dogs of all breeds and ages, and can be set up in any environment, indoors or out. The benefits are numerous- confidence-building, agency, calming and thorough enrichment that uses all the dog's senses. This is the crème de la crème of enrichment and so valuable to both dog and human.

[Teach your dog to take a breath.](#)

Teaching a dog to take a breath works exactly the same way that it does for us. The intake of a deep breath gives both species a chance to take in oxygen and pause long enough for our brains to begin to work instead of react.

[Licking to Soothe](#)

Non-compulsive licking releases relaxing, feel-good hormones in dogs. Many dogs will also lick themselves as a way to calm down and self-soothe. Give your dog a Kong or [Lickimat](#) with peanut butter, cream cheese or pumpkin when they need some zen.

Don't have a kong? Smear pumpkin puree on a baking sheet and freeze it.

⚠ If your dog is obsessively licking the same spot on the couch or their own wrists, feet or flanks, your dog may be feeling anxious. Licking could also be a symptom of allergies, a hormonal imbalance or even pain. If you think your dog is licking excessively, call your vet.

Stinky T-Shirt

Wear an old shirt you don't care about during a workout. Then put it in your dog's resting space. It's soothing for the dog to smell their favorite person.

Music can be very relaxing.

A study by the Scottish SPCA and University of Glasgow shows that reggae and soft rock are preferred by most dogs. If your dog likes soothing human voices, try an audiobook. Some dogs like the sound of classical or new age music. Check out iCalm for Dogs. White noise or environmental sounds can be soothing for dogs.

Dogs can hear four times as far as humans and can detect sounds which are inaudible to the human ear. When dogs hear songs, they hear each instrument according to its frequency.

↑ Music can also be great for masking any sounds that cause your dog to stress and bark. Play the music loud enough to help block exterior noise.

Essential Oils and Flower Essences

"The behavioral effects of olfactory stimulation on dogs at a rescue shelter" ([Applied Animal Behaviour Science, May 2018](#)), focused on four scents: vanilla, coconut, valerian, and ginger. If you'd like to conduct your own experiment, try one of the scents above or something you already love. [Blackwing Farms has pre-made formulas](#). Put a drop of essential oil onto a bandana. Let your dog sniff the bandana. If they respond positively, tie the bandana loosely around their neck. You may find that your dog settles down.

⚠ Stay away from cinnamon, citrus, pennyroyal, peppermint, pine, sweet birch, tea tree (melaleuca), wintergreen, and ylang ylang, which are poisonous to dogs.

Dilute, dilute, dilute! A single drop of essential oil can be mixed into a small glass jar of olive or coconut oil, for example. You can then further dilute the oil by repeating the process, placing a single drop of the diluted mixture into a second jar of carrier oil. While this may not smell as strongly to you, it will still be plenty powerful for your dog's superior sniffer.

★ Once you find the right scent, add some calming enrichment to your dog's safe space or crate.



Read to your dog.

Do you have a new reader in the house? Dogs are quiet listeners who don't judge or correct mistakes. It's also a great opportunity for relaxation for 30 minutes with a lovable friend.

[Three Stories You Can Read To Your Dog](#) by Sara Swan Miller

★ Just be.

Find a place where and when you and your dog can both just be. Choose times when your dog is already calm and has had all their needs met. You don't have to be engaged in any particular activity. There are no training cues or food rewards, or even toys, required. No phones for the humans, no thoughts about what you should be doing. Be calm and quiet. Sit close but not necessarily touching.

Humans are so tactile but dogs are usually not. They don't need petting or even touching to just be. (As I write this, my 80 pound dog wants to *just be* in my lap!)



THE FIFTEEN-MINUTE RUCKSACK WALK (OR BACKPACK WALK).

created by Steve Mann

The Rucksack Walk is an exercise that promotes mindfulness with your dog. It's especially good for dogs who need space, sheltered dogs, newly homed dogs, senior and recovering dogs, puppies... actually it's good for most any dog. Humans who need to slow down could use this too, of course.

Here's what you need:

- 15 minutes
- a long leash
- 2 small tubs containing:
- a chewy thing
- just a little space
- a treat pouch (treats)
- -a novel scent
- a "thing" (just any old thing)
- some acting skills
- some sort of sack
- a (sharable) food item
- perhaps some water

Here are your only rules:

1. It is not training. Every interaction is unconditional and free of pressure.
2. Every single word is spoken in a whisper. (and no cell phones)
3. Everything that comes from the bag is to be held like it's a baby bird.
4. Time spent is more valuable than distance covered. Un-hurry.

- 1 Start with a leisurely walk, dog on the long line. Let him sniff around and maybe pee. If he runs and the leash goes tight, slow down to a stop. Encourage checking in with a little noise then slowly toss the treat to the other side of you.
- 2 TRIANGLE RECALLS. With your dog near you, drop treat and jog backwards away from the dog to encourage following. Gently call if necessary, drop a treat at your feet and back away again. Do this in a triangle avoid the dog sniffing "new" ground. Do as many or as few as you would like.
- 3 Get out the "THING". Take it slowly out of the sack. Calmly and quietly, act like it's a very big deal. Baby bird, etc. Allow the dog to lick/sniff/hold it. After couple moments, return it to the sack.
- 4 Now sit down and open the sack deliberately. Act like there is the most exciting thing in the world in there. Take out the tub containing the SCENT. Give it so much attention that if the dog wasn't paying attention to you before, he will now. Allow him a sniff for just a few minutes. Return it slowly to sack. Close the sack.
- 5 Bring out the FOOD. Open the tub slowly and allow the dog to sniff. Sniff it yourself. Make a big deal about it. Share it by feeding in little bits. Let the dog savor it. Return tub to the sack. Close the sack.
- 6 Now introduce the CHEWY. Again, get his interest. Chewing releases feel-good hormones. Sit close enough to touch. Stroke the dog gently as he chews, as long as he seems relaxed with that.
- 7 Once your dog has snooped, tested, chewed and used everything in the sack, the items are packed away. Get up slowly and walk quietly back the same way as you came, covering the same ground. Give your dog a opportunity to sniff. This is still part of the experience.

Mindfulness is what the Rucksack Walk is all about. It doesn't lead to anything. It is what it is.

SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

Social enrichment is any interaction between animals (does not need to be same species) that does not involve conflict. Hanging out with you may be socially enriching but it's possibly boring (no offense). Social enrichment for dogs should be like a stimulating conversation with an interesting new friend.



Tag Along Dog

Take your dog to work, along to visit friends or run errands. Don't forget to bring treats so you can reinforce any good behavior. If you have a fearful or reactive dog, talk to a professional about appropriate social interactions. The following local establishments allow dogs inside:

- Hardware and farm stores such as [Tractor Supply](#), [Barnes Supply](#) and chain box stores.
 - ➔ Home Depot may have changed their policy.
- Craft and fabric stores like Michaels and JOANN Fabric and Craft
- Total Wine!
- Sporting goods stores such as Bass Pro. Dick's allows dogs at managers discretion.
- TJX companies: Home Goods, TJ Maxx and Marshalls
- Know some dog-friendly stores? We'll add to the list.

⬆ Work on generalizing some training skills in a safe environment that's dog-friendly.

➔ If you have a fearful or reactive dog, talk to a professional about appropriate social interactions.

★ Garden Centers

Large home improvement chains and garden centers are typically dog-friendly. It's pretty low-pressure social enrichment and those plant smells offer a great sniffing opportunity. Keep the visits short so your dog is not overwhelmed by the new environment and sounds.

Consent

It's never okay to touch others without their consent. Your dog is not for the amusement of the general public. Be assertive in protecting your dog's physical and mental health, as well as the safety of those around them. If you are ever unsure if your dog can handle something, always err on the side of caution. Choose management over crossing your fingers and hoping for the best.

"The next time you see a dog you'd like to greet, stop a few feet away, stand sideways rather than straight on, and avoid looking directly into her eyes.

Wait for the dog to come all the way to you. If she doesn't, she doesn't want to be petted.

So don't pet her. It's not really that much to ask."

— Dr. Patricia McConnell

The Other End of the Leash: Why We Do What We Do Around Dogs

▲ Get to know your dog.

Unfortunately, we often think our dogs should love to spend time with all other dogs. But just like humans, dogs have their own preferences for friends. There are social dogs who love mingling with other dogs and, on the other end of the spectrum, there are dogs who would hope to never see a dog on their walk. And there are many personalities in-between. If you need help figuring out where your dog is on the spectrum, [BadRap](#) can help.

Is Your Dog a Social Butterfly?

Consider a well-managed doggy daycare if your dog loves to chase and play with other dogs. Daycare isn't for every owner (\$) or every dog (fearful, reactive, socially awkward). If your dog is more of a book-club dog than a bar hopper, a single playmate may be more fun for them.

↑ To find the right daycare, take a tour and ask questions. How do they supervise the dogs and what do they do if the dogs seem overwhelmed? Watch how they handle playgroups (you may be able to view on their webcam before taking your dog).

A Stroll with a Friend

Taking your dog for a walk with a dog pal is socially enriching even if they are not obviously interacting. It's like a shared hobby.

What about dog parks?

That's another book! For brevity's sake, I'll leave you with 3 tips.

- Learn about dog body language and appropriate dog play.
 - [Zoom Room Guide to Body Language](#)
 - [Dog Play Gestures](#)
 - Pay attention to your dog and to other dogs coming and going.
 - Be ready to go before your dog is.
-

Dog-friendly Events, Bars and Coffee Shops

Before taking your dog out to public spaces, it's important to know whether your dog enjoys other dogs, approaching strangers, crowds and loud noises. Your dog should have appropriate manners and know how to settle on a mat.

Follow these basic guidelines:

- stick to less busy times
 - find seats outside.
 - know how to read your dog
 - and be ready to leave when your pal is no longer enjoying the scene.
-

★ Social Play

Dogs, like humans, continue to play into adulthood. Why not play together? Play probably helps animals prepare for swings in emotion, gets them ready and honed for life and let's not forget, play is fun! Social play is goofing around with your dog, being affectionate and just enjoying interacting with each other. Think of the way we play with puppies, before the training begins. Playing with your dog is about bonding, interacting, engaging and teaching. Learn more about the benefits of social play with your dog (without toys or treats) at Amy Cook's [The Play Way](#).



Can you have too many friends?

Some dogs enjoy the company of other animals. Obviously, safety is of the utmost concern when exploring these possible friendships.

SUDOGKU - BRAIN GAMES

Problem-solving activities such as training games are a great way to provide mental stimulation to your dog while bonding. Just be sure you do not make things too complicated too soon for your dog to avoid frustration.



Cup/Shell Game

Your dog can use their eyes and ears to find treats in the Cup game. Place three identical cups upside down on a flat surface, and put a treat under one of them. Switch the cups around while your dog watches. Then, challenge your dog to figure out which cup contains the treat. At first, you can allow your dog to knock over the cups until they find the treat. To increase the challenge, wait for them to nose one of the cups, then pick up their chosen cup to allow them to take the treat, or to see if they chose the wrong cup. Then, reshuffle the cups.

Spin the Bottle

There are several variations of this fun game, and it's easy to make your own set-up at home. Use a tension rod and an empty two-liter bottle with holes cut into it. Run tension rod through the bottle and put it in a doorway. The goal of the game is to spin the bottle to make treats drop out onto the floor. It can be modified for big dogs and little dogs, and you can make it harder or easier depending on how many holes you cut in the bottle.

Dognition

Duke University's Canine Cognition Center created Dognition, a scientific tool which is available to the dog owning public to help better understand how our dogs think through the use of innovative games and digital content. This project allows the scientists to collect valuable information about canine cognition while providing dog owners with the opportunity to grow the bond with their dog.

Kibble Bowling

Take pieces of kibble, one at a time, and simply bowl it towards the dog just like a bowling ball. This seems simple (it is) but it sparks their brain. It's great for coordination and concentration. You are teaching the dog to wait for your action. You'll get their full focus and bring the food to life.

Hot-Cold Game by [Megan Esala](#)

This is a top pick for lazy owners with brilliant dogs. Sit back on the couch with your choice beverage in one hand, and a handful of small, healthy treats in the other. Ignore any attempts by your dog to approach you directly for food. Think of a doggie action, like walking over to the bookshelf and making contact with it. Watch your dog for ANY movement in the right direction, and when you spot it say "HOT!" in an excited tone, and toss a treat, but not too close to you OR the bookshelf. Gradually hold out for movement that is closer and closer to the action on your mind, and see how your dog reacts. If they are a quick giver-upper you'll need to make it easier. If they are a real try-er, you can let them get frustrated and rack their brains a bit harder. If you stumble on an action that will make a neat party trick, just throw in a verbal cue once they are good at it, and you're set.

Teach Your Dog To Talk

Using recordable dog training buttons is a fun way to increase the communication that you already have with your dog. It's also something that, with practice, every dog can use to communicate at least basic things like wanting a walk or to play. The whole principle is based on having clear communication with your dog to provide them a sense of agency.



[Bunny, the talking dog](#) allegedly understands and communicates 92 words!

Is Bunny for real? Hmmm. We will let you decide that.

[Read this peer-reviewed article from the IAABC](#) for more info on dogs using buttons to communicate.

ENVIRONMENTAL ENRICHMENT



You can change the scenery, entirely or you can make your dog's living space more interesting and stimulating to decrease boredom and its subsequent problems. Sometimes the smallest changes can make a big difference.

DogTV

Did you know there is a global TV channel designed to be watched by dogs? DogTV provides purposely-designed periods of calming content followed by light stimulation and the audio and video on DogTV has been scientifically altered to provide optimal viewing for dogs. Just, wow.

Blanket Forts and Tents

I mean, who doesn't love a pillow fort?

Indoor Obstacle Course

Set up this obstacle course with things around the house and novel objects for your dog to find. This could be as simple as one or two objects that won't fall over or roll around if your dog sniffs them. For worried dogs, slowly add more objects with plenty of delicious food to create a positive association. For confident dogs, get creative with chairs, blankets, an ottoman, broomsticks and kids toys.

Dog-Safe Bubbles

They come in bacon and peanut butter flavors! No kidding!

Nature's Playground

What can you use for an agility course in your yard or on your walk? Tree stump or large rock for paws up or jump up. Fallen log or gate for jump over or balance. Trees and shrubs fences for weaving through. Streams for jumping.

★ Beach Babe

Talk about enrichment! The sounds, the smells, sand under paws, birds to chase, miles to run! Be sure the beach is dog-friendly and observe leash laws.

★ Sensory Garden

If you have the space and inclination, why not set up a garden which is pleasing to both humans and dogs?

Possible components to your Sensory Garden:

- Dog-friendly grasses and plants (no chemicals or pesticides).
- Cedar chip paths feel good beneath their feet and can repel fleas.
- Hay beds bring new welcome scents. Replace periodically (use old hay as mulch).
- Garden stones with smooth textures.
- Tiered levels: Build raised areas in your yard that your dog can climb on.
- Trails which wind through the garden to encourage your dog to explore.
- Digging pit: Make a sand pit they can dig in.
- Fresh water: Fill a kiddie pool with water for splashing. Add a bubbler or a pond fountain to create running water.
- Hollow log: Drill holes in a log, and put dog-friendly essential oils in them or hide toys or treats in them.
- Surprises to Find: an old smelly garden glove, a delicious treat, a well-loved toy.
- Fencing to keep your dog safe.
- Shade will be appreciated by all especially in summer months.

Dog-Friendly Plants :

Herbs such as thyme, catnip, lavender, rosemary, peppermint, lemon balm, chamomile, valerian and hops for sniffing. (Space these herbs out if they are strong-smelling.)

Edible plants such as marigold, nasturtium and peas for nibbling.

Grasses like oat, wheat and barley for rolling, grazing and foraging.

⚠ Know which plants are dangerous for dogs and don't plant them where your dog could access them.

Roll in the Grass

Rolling and grazing on grass is a simple pleasure most dogs enjoy. Many dogs do not have choice-based access to grass so this easy enrichment could make a big impact on your dog's life. Find a field or plant your own.

Wind Chimes

Hang them in the dog room or outside. Hang a mobile and set it into motion a couple times a day.

⚠ If your dog obsesses over lights and shadows, be sure there are no mirrors on the mobile.

TOYS AND PUZZLES

We love puzzle toys, and your dog will too. Interactive dog toys are designed to help keep your dog busy while you're away, stave off boredom, and provide mental stimulation for their natural curiosity.



Nina Ottosson Puzzles

This company has the corner on food dispensing toys of various difficulty. They are more puzzle toys than food toys. These toys are designed to be used under human supervision. Many of them are easily destroyed if left with your dog unattended.

← Smartypants Holly is demonstrating the challenging Dog Twister toy!

📌 Try splitting your dog's meal among several puzzle toys.

📍 Check HomeGoods, Marshalls, or TJ Maxx for great deals on dog toys and puzzles.

📍 Has your dog already figured out the puzzle?

Consider organizing a dog puzzle exchange in your neighborhood. Make sure the puzzles are sanitized before exchanging. And don't expect to get your puzzle back in the same condition you sent it out in. Dogs will be dogs, after all.

Outward Hound Hide and Seek Toys

Some dogs love "un-stuffing" this type of toy and then playing with the squeak toys inside. (We love the Cookie and Milk version)

All The Toys!

There are just too many great toys to list. Look for toys that make noise, can be used for more than one thing, dispense treats or other activities that your dog will enjoy. Durable toys are a good idea if you have a chewer. Look at subscription boxes which cater to your dog's needs, size and preferences such as [Barkbox](#) and [Kongbox](#), [Pupbox](#) for puppies and [Bullymake](#) for chewers.

It's alive... IT'S ALIVE!

Sometimes toys are much more interesting when they are “alive.” Take any stuffed dog toy and tie a long piece of rope around it to create an animated/moving toy for your dog to chase or follow. You could also use a long line, or even a leash instead of rope. You are a puppeteer as you move the toy, sometimes slowly and sometimes in swift, jerking motions back and forth – depending on what catches your dog’s interest.

Fur Real.

Some dogs prefer toys that look and feel more like, well, prey. A squeaker adds to the realism.

(Cue: Circle of Life)

[Clean Run](#) is our favorite place for realistic toys.



Toy Rotation

A study published in [Animal Cognition](#) found that dogs preferred to sniff or pick up a novel toy instead of ones they'd already played with in 38 out of 50 cases.

Rotate your dog's toys weekly by making only 4-5 toys available at a time. Keep a variety of toys easily accessible and the rest in a toy chest, out of sight. If your dog has a favorite comfort toy, you should probably leave it out all the time.

📌 Did you know that dogs see in a dichromatic color scale? Dogs see the colors blue, yellow and variations of grey. When choosing toys, it may be a good idea to go with a blue or yellow color. This is a picture I took of my dogs most commonly used toys.

The picture on the left is how we see them and the on the right is most likely how your dog sees them: →



Tech Toys (The Treat Roombas)

There are a number of electronic food-dispensing toys on the market that allow you to visually check in on your dog and dispense treats. Some automatic dog treat dispensers have timers and can dispense treats throughout the day or during short treat sessions. While they can all be enriching, they do perform a variety of functions; interacting with your dog by camera throughout the day, dispensing treats or throwing a ball for a dog. [CleverPet](#), [Furbo](#), [Petzi Treat Cam](#), [Pet Tutor](#), [PupPod](#), [Treat and Train](#), [iFetch](#), [iDig](#) and [Happy Puppkin Water Fountain](#) are examples.

Dogs who don't like toys.

Lack of interest in toys is not necessarily linked to age (though possibly cognitive function). Many dogs have never learned to play, are under-stimulated, have a medical concern which makes play uncomfortable or perhaps they have too many options. To encourage toy play, get their attention first. Act silly with the dog toy, embrace your inner dog. Play in really short sessions. Don't be afraid to rub food on a toy to entice the dog to play. Try new toys or bring out some old toys. Think outside of the box and try some of the following:

- Boxes: pizza, cereal, pasta, crackers, etc. for destructo-boxes or scent games.
- Empty paper towel and toilet paper tubes for treat bombs
- Egg cartons, paper bags and packing materials for ripping
- Plastic bottles for food toys. crunch, crunch.
- Old fabric dog leashes make rope toys
- Old clothes make nice tug toys
- Old towels and rags can be made into large knots or braided tug toys
- Old socks as holders for tennis balls or plastic bottles

TRAIN THE BRAIN



If training is used as an enrichment tool, all methods must be based in positive reinforcement. Dogs who have been taught several different behaviors and trained in the use of a variety of objects are more likely to investigate their environment and acquire new ways to gain enrichment. It's like double enrichment!

Take a class.

Training increases your dog's mental activity, enhances the bond between you and your dog, and it's super fun. Contact a Certified Professional Dog Trainer for group or private classes that can give you and your dog lots of great skills to learn and games to play together. There are many kinds of training to investigate, from a basic manners class, a workshop for a specific skill and trick training. Please see our **Resources** section for info on finding a professional in your area. Or, sign up for the Good Human online course below!

The advertisement features a close-up of a smiling dog's face on the right side. On the left, there is a semi-transparent grey box containing the text "Good Dog!" in a large, bold, black font, followed by "Basic Manners for Adult Dogs" in a smaller, bold, black font. Below this, the words "online course" are written in a white, cursive script. At the bottom left of the box is a red button with a white double arrow icon. To the right of the button, the text "Enroll for \$70" is written in white. The background of the entire advertisement is a blurred outdoor scene with green grass and brown earth.

★ Let's talk about clickers!

I could talk all day. I love clicker training because it's clear, consistent communication for your learner. Think of taking a photo of the behavior you wish to see. The clicker would be the sound of the shutter. Read more about [clicker training here!](#)



"Ultimately, clicker training, when done right, is about honoring animals' choices."

— Irith Bloom

Shaping Games

If you're a savvy trainer, try training your dog 1 new trick per week. Don't guide or lure them at all, just use the clicker and click for every approximation of the goal trick. It's a real workout and fun for both dog and human.

[Learn how to free shape here.](#) Now try these out with your dog:

- Shake a Paw
- Back Up
- Roll Over
- Pray
- Crawl
- Sit Pretty
- Yawn
- Shy (cover eyes)
- Stretch
- Cross Paws
- Speak
- Get a Tissue

Touch and Go

Take a bunch of kibble (use a treat pouch) and ask your dog to simply touch your hand. Mark and toss a piece of kibble in a place your dog will need to run to. Easy and effective!

Tricks!

Set aside a few minutes each day to spend time with your dog and teach them some cool tricks. It doesn't take much to have them looking like stars. Try Shake, Beg, Hand Target and so many more. If you are stuck for ideas, check the YouTube channel's [Kikopup](#) or [JustJesse](#).

⚠ When using treats for training, don't forget to adjust your dog's normal food intake to avoid upset tummies and excess weight gain.

Toddler Activity Center

Find an activity center at a charity store or used furniture store. Great for shaping games. Teach your dog to nose or paw buttons and move things around.

Come When Called (Recall)

Coming when Called is not only fun for your dog, it's very important for their safety to make sure they consistently come when called. If they accidentally get loose you have a good chance of getting your dog to return to you safely. You can reinforce your recall by periodically calling your dog to you when you're out on a walk or they're running around in the yard. Reward them with treats when they come to you. Practice throughout the house. When your dog is farther away from you (I toss treats down the hall to get this!), ask them to "come". The faster they come the more treats they get!

✚ Use an enthusiastic, happy voice to call your dog to you and always reward between your knees so dog comes all the way to you. Give an unpredictable number of treats so they stick around to see if they will get more.

Kettle Training

Use time you might otherwise be standing around to train your dog. Waiting for food to heat up or for the kettle to boil is the perfect amount of time to train.

Dogs learn best with short, frequent practice sessions.

Pattern Games by Leslie McDevitt

Pattern Games are predictable, simple games which provide the dog with structure. It's good for dogs who need to focus. The human equivalent would be like playing a familiar iPhone game- lots of stuff happening over there, but I'm engaged right here!

Here's my favorite:

Up-Down Game

1. Wait for your dog to look up at you.
2. Click.
3. Follow the click with a treat placed on the floor in front of your feet.
4. Your dog will look Down to eat the treat.
5. When your dog looks Up at you again, repeat steps 2-4

All done!

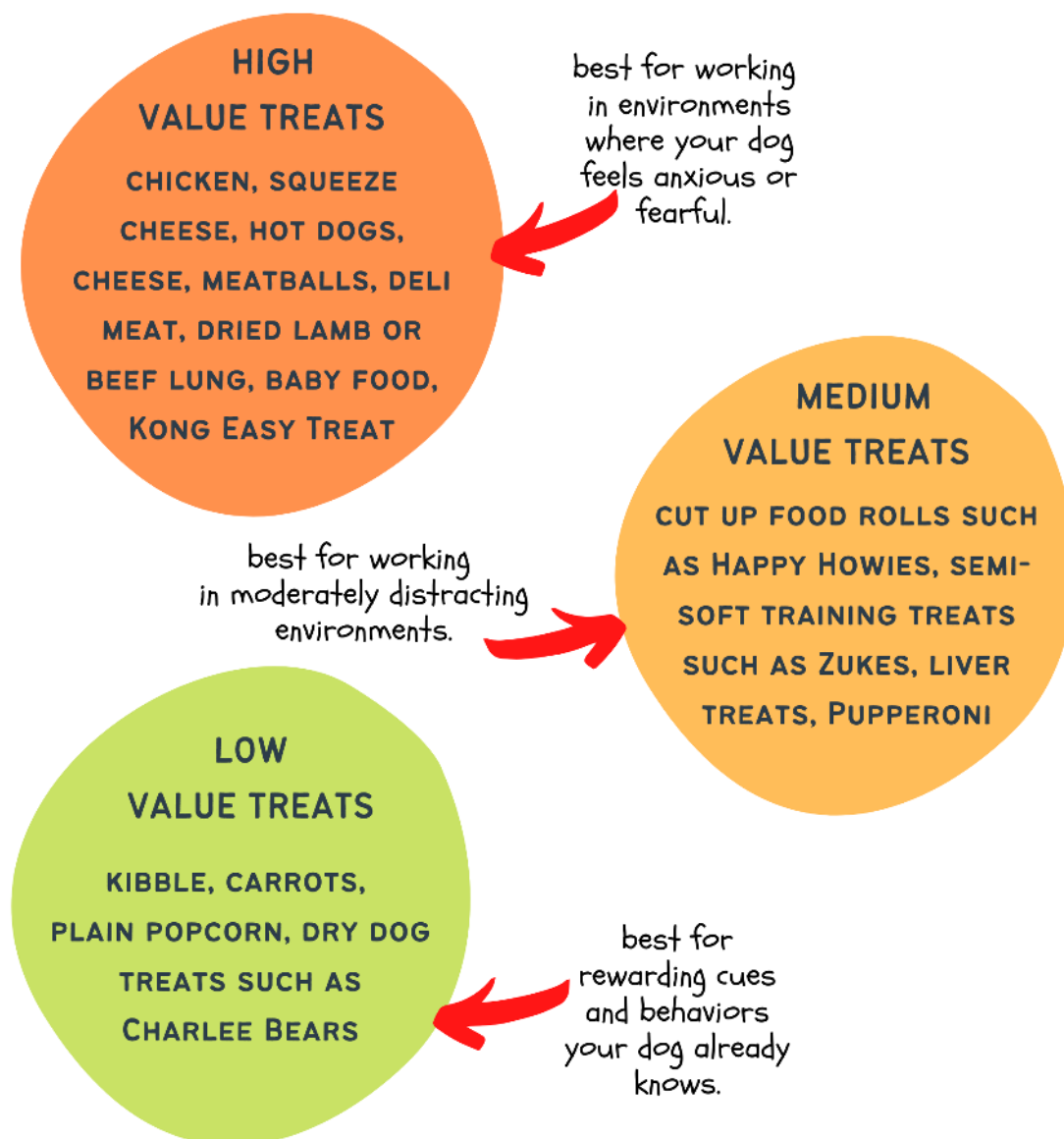
Once you have finished playing or the game has ended, tell your dog 'All done' or 'Finish' so that they learn to associate the play session or game being over.

- Use kibble and add meat or cheese to the kibble so it smells more delicious. Kibble eau de Hotdog.
- Break up treats so they're smaller.
- Try fruits and vegetables.

Treat Hierarchy

The treats you use for training is best determined by answering the following questions:

- What am I training?
- Where am I training it?
- How do I want my dog to feel about it?
- What's my dog's preference?





★ SMART X 50

by Kathy Sdao

*What you reward is what you get-
Make sure you are rewarding the right stuff*

1

50 TREATS

Put 50 treats (or pieces of your dog's dinner kibble) in a jar or treat pouch.

2

PAY ATTENTION

Pay attention to your dog throughout the day.
Don't prompt or cue them to do anything specific.

3

TOSS A TREAT

When your dog does *anything* cute or useful say "good dog" and toss them a treat.

4

REPEAT

Repeat throughout the day until all of the treats are gone.

HOW DOES IT HELP?

- It helps you capitalize on the good behaviors your dog already offers.
- It helps you recognize your dog's good behavior.
- It's manageable even in a busy household

MAKE A PLAN

Are there times where your dog is wild, squirrely, trifling, bored, etc?

Negative behaviors associated with boredom may look something like:

- excessive barking or whining
 - hyperactivity
 - excessive mouthiness
 - jumping
 - chewing on furniture
 - getting into things like the trash, your clothes, etc.
 - scratching at furniture
 - scratching at furniture
 - following you around
 - tail chasing or repetitive behaviors
 - pacing, unable to settle
 - excessive licking (when dog has no allergies or reason to lick)
-

What undesirable behaviors does your dog currently exhibit?

What needs are the undesirable behaviors meeting? If your dog has undesirable behaviors regularly, determine the function of that behavior.

What enrichment do you already have in place?

Let's Plan!

Based on the answers to the questions above, come up with 2 or 3 different physical or mental exercises that will serve the function of the undesirable behavior. This can be as simple as adding a ten-minute sniff walk and a puzzle feeder for your dog's evening meals. There are no right or wrong answers. But remember those Elements of Enrichment? That's a good place to start.

- Enrichment is enriching.
 - Enrichment is individualized.
 - Enrichment is goal-oriented.
 - Enrichment provides choice and control.
 - Enrichment is about variety and novelty.
 - Enrichment facilitates species and breed typical behaviors.
-

Adjust the Plan

Is the dog engaging with the item or exercise? Are there any changes in their behavior? Adjust the plan as needed to make sure it's right for your dog. Start experimenting with different activities Mix up duration, time of day, and type of activity. It's not necessarily about adding "more". Often, it's just about "different". For instance, instead of a 10-minute walk try a 10-minute flirt pole session if your dog needs more physical exercise.

Data!

Keep track of what works and doesn't work to address your dog's behavior. That way the next time you see the change in behavior start you know exactly what to do and when! And don't let perfect get in the way of good. Small steps can go a long way! Pick just one thing today and see how your dog responds. After a while, pick another thing and add that in. This will help to make enrichment a habit.

Use the template on the following page to get your plan started.

1. List the undesirable behavior(s) at the top.
2. Make some notes in each section.
 - Could this type of enrichment meet the same needs as the undesirable behavior?
 - In what way is this (enrichment) need being met?
 - What improvements could be made to make it more enriching for my dog?
3. Prioritize. Start with no more than 3.
4. Keep it going for 2 weeks.
5. Readjust, if needed.

Does this seem like a lot of work? Or overwhelming?
Email Jennifer at [Good Human Dog Training](#) for a consultation and get a customized plan for your dog!

ENRICHMENT PLAN

undesirable
behaviors

SAFETY AND SECURITY

Dog should be protected from harm and feel secure in their environment.



SPECIES-TYPICAL

Effective enrichment allows the dog to safely display more "dog" behaviors.



INDEPENDENCE AND CHOICE

Dogs require the ability to have some control over their environment.



MENTAL STIMULATION

Dogs need meaningful and challenging mental activities.



HEALTH AND NUTRITION

Healthy dogs are able to perform their natural behaviors and be enriched.



PHYSICAL EXERCISE

Regular physical exercise must be appropriate for the dog.



SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

Dog's need to interact with other dogs and humans.



CALMING OPPORTUNITIES

Being able to relax and sleep, as needed, is essential for every dog.



ENVIRONMENTAL

The dog's living space is interesting and stimulating so as to decrease boredom.

RESOURCES



[Good Human Dog Training](#). People Training for Dogs. We help families learn practical, effective, fun, and humane techniques for improving their life with their dogs.

➔ We also provide coaching for owner-trained service dogs

[Learning to Dog Training and Enrichment](#)

From Puppy Preschool to Canine Good Citizen, Marsha has the best dog training classes around.

[The Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers® \(CCPDT®\)](#)

Thousands of dog training professionals worldwide maintain the CCPDT's certifications as a mark of high professional distinction.

[Karen Pryor Academy](#)

KPA CTPs have demonstrated a high level of technical knowledge and hands-on skill both training canines and teaching people!

[International Association of Animal Behavior Consultants \(IAABC\)](#)

IAABC behavior consultants can assist owners in managing and modifying problem behaviors, and in the process help strengthen the relationships between an owner and their dog. [Check out the journal](#).

[Fear Free Certified Professionals](#)

Whether you are looking for a vet or other pro who knows how to handle a fearful, anxious, or stressed out dog, or you simply want the best care possible for your four-legged friend, a Fear Free Certified Professional is here to help.

[The International Association of Animal Behavior Consultants \(IAABC\)](#)

Animal behavior consultants and trainers worldwide with through ethical standards using [Least Intrusive, Minimally Aversive \(LIMA\) practices](#).

[The Humane Hierarchy](#) on which LIMA is based.

[American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior \(AVSAB\) Position Statements](#)

A group of veterinarians and doctorate level animal behaviorists dedicated to improving the lives of animals and people through an understanding of animal behavior.

[The Pet Professional Guild \(PPG\)](#)

PPG partners, members and affiliates focus on the dog's physical, mental, environmental and nutritional well-being adhering to a holistic approach to the care and training of family dogs.

[The S.P.I.D.E.R. Model](#)

This model provides a framework for institutions to set up, review, refine and modify environmental enrichment programs to fit their own needs.

[AniEd's 100 Days of Enrichment](#)

A joyous enrichment project for you and your dog. Daily challenges, that can be adjusted to suit your dog, their lifestyle, and even other species.

[ASPCA Canine Enrichment](#)

Best practices for enrichment for both sheltered and pet dogs.

[Canine Enrichment](#), the Facebook group

Almost 300K members sharing their tips. It's a movement.

[Dog Dementia Help and Support](#)

Great resource for senior dog enrichment.

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