



Enrichment

Dog enrichment is important because dogs are not used to our world designed for humans. Many things can stress them, such as noise, other dogs, temperature changes, transportation, unfamiliar objects, or people. The purpose of enrichment is to reduce stress and provide an energy release. When provided adequate enrichment the animal has a sense of control of their environment. Adequate enrichment varies depending on age, breed, and what your dog finds enriching if your dog is afraid or bored of the enrichment, they will not use it. Watching your dog's habits such as a habitual licker may need a lick mat or licking bowl to help enrich their lives, a dog that chases cats would love a flirt pole to chase, or a dog that likes to tear up throw pillows you can put some treats in an old paper towel roll to shred. Every dog needs to be supervised with new enrichment to ensure it is safe for the dog.

How do you know if your dog is getting enough enrichment? When a dog doesn't get enough exercise and mental engagement, they have built up energy and they will start doing some of the following: excessive barking, whining, and whimpering, clinging to their guardian, exaggerated reactions to stimulation, pacing or tail-chasing, tearing up inappropriate household items, or mounting. There are 5 different enrichment types: social, nutritional, occupational, sensory, and physical.

<https://knowitenrichment.com/> is a website to search what best enrichment will help your dog based on their behavior.

Age: Not all enrichment is made the same, depending on your dog's age there is an enrichment that best suits them.

Puppies: (1 year and younger) need a lot more physical enrichment to be desensitized for grooming and vet exams. They need novel games and a rotation of safe toys to teeth on. Low-impact physical exercise due to their bones growing, tug of war is a great game and training opportunity for a young pup. After a few tugs on a rope ask your puppy to "drop it" as you trade them the toy for a treat.

Adult Dog: (1-10 years old) Your dog can now participate in higher-impact enrichment such as agility training allowing them to climb up and jump off objects.

Senior Dogs: (10- Rainbow Bridge) Now it is time to move back to low-impact and maybe even low-calorie enrichment. Slow down with your dog and let them smell the flowers. Play "Find It", listen to relaxing music, watch "Dog TV", or enjoy a relaxing puppy massage.

Breed: Depending on your dog's breed they will crave an enrichment to feed their natural drive. AKC recognizes 7 different breed types.

Herding/Working/Sport/Terriers: These dogs love a job, so they will be in the occupational section of enrichment. Enrichment for them can include flirt pole, hide-and-seek, and agility.

Hounds: There are scent and sight hounds, these guys will be in the sensory section of enrichment. Scent hounds will love games like snifari, hide and seek, or smelling dog-safe herbs. Sight hounds may like watching "Dog TV" with colors of blues and yellows and bird watching.

Non-Sport: These dogs often like social enrichment, playing with age-appropriate toys, and being brushed with a fur-suitable comb.

Toy: These dogs will love enrichment by sitting on your lap and being brushed with a fur-suitable brush they often love nutritional enrichment and may shy away from occupational enrichment.



Social:

- Providing supervised play dates with trusted and compatible dogs.
- Taking your dog for a walk or hikes and providing a positive relationship through play, praise, and petting.
- Take your dog to a public space to neutrally interact with their environment. Ex: Birds, dogs, people, and kids.
- When introducing a new dog ensure there is no tension on the leashes and use the 3-sec rule. Let them smell each other in 3-second increments, then move them away from each other, this will give you an idea of how they feel.



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Nutritional: This encourages a dog to use their natural foraging behavior to earn food.

- Puzzle Feeders (Kong/Topple, Snuffle or lick mats) depending on your dog's skill level. Hide kibble in a rolled-up towel or old toilet paper roll. A hollowed-out pepper can also be stuffed.
- Play the hide-and-seek game with food rewards.
- Ice pops: Freeze your Kong/Topple, lick mats, or put some dog-safe broth in an ice cube tray for your teething puppy.
- Rotate your dog's chewable toys such as yak chews, bully sticks, or even a head of cabbage.



Occupational: This type of enrichment will challenge your dog by giving them a job. Some examples are:

- Agility training, fetch, herding ball/egg, trick training, dock diving, flirt pole, or search and rescue.
- Positive reinforcement training in different environments such as at the veterinarian or groomer.
- Hide-and-seek game with you.



Sensory: This stimulates different senses of the dog such as sight, sound, or smell. Here are some examples:

- Low-volume soothing music is an auditory enrichment. (Studies show dogs enjoy Reggae)
- "Find it" game or snifari: scattering treats for your dog to find using their nose.
- Bird/Squirrel watching, and "Dog T.V." Colors such as blues and yellows are easier for dogs to see.
- Adding dog-safe scents like herbs (lavender or chamomile), spices (coconut, or ginger), or commercially available scents (Thunder Ease). Place scents inside a piece of PVC pipe with additional drilled holes tied to a rope so that they can be easily added and removed from the crate.
- The cup game (hiding treats or kibble under a cup for your dog to find).



Physical: Provides an outlet for positive expression of your dog instincts, including changing the complexity of the dogs living and walking space by:

- Rotating safe and effective enrichment toys. (Toys your dog finds enriching)
- Adding a bed, raised platform, ramp or steps, adding a kiddie pool or a doggie door. Unused pallets in your yard will allow your dog to practice balance safely.
- Brushing your dog with their fur-suitable comb or giving them a gentle puppy massage.
- Climbing while on walks or hikes ask your dog to safely climb on low trees or benches.

