

Canine Enrichment

Encouraging your dog to be a dog!

The term "enrichment" encompasses a wide variety of activities that help meet your dog's needs.

Enrichment activities should be a part of your dog's daily life. When your dog engages in enrichment, they get much needed mental stimulation and, in some cases, physical exercise. Enrichment also helps you develop a better relationship with your dog. You have an opportunity to learn more about your dog and what they find rewarding. Knowing what your dog finds rewarding is useful for training and behavior modification. Engaging in enrichment activities can also provide an outlet for "destructive" behaviors and even mitigate behavioral concerns. Enrichment should encourage your dog to explore, think, and have fun. Enrichment should be interesting, engaging, stimulating, challenging, and enjoyable. If your dog isn't having fun, it's not enriching.



Enrichment activities that engage a dog's senses include smelling, tasting, touch, sight, chewing, and sounds. Smelling is particularly important for dogs. Try a sniffari (an "at-the-dog's-pace sniffy walk"), a snuffle mat, a puzzle toy, or a game of "find it". Give your dog an enrichment box to explore and forage in.

Experiment with different dog-safe chews, flavors, and things to lick.



Games are another great way to engage with your dog. Try a game of fetch or tug, play the "green light, red light" game, or do a round of hide and seek. Not only are games fun, but they help your dog learn skills through play.



Teaching your dog something new challenges your dog to think and allows them to practice listening and impulse control. Try teaching your dog a new skill such as "back" or "down", a trick such as "spin" or "bow", or dog parkour (a.k.a. urban agility) such as "2 feet up" or "over."

Remember to supervise your dog. Safety is the number one priority. Plus, knowing what your dog enjoys can really help with training, as mentioned above.

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