

Canine Enrichment

Enrichment activities should be a part of your dog's daily life.

By engaging in enrichment, your dog is getting some much needed mental stimulation and in some cases, exercise. Enrichment activities should allow your dog to be a dog. It also helps you develop a relationship with your dog. You have an opportunity to learn more about your dog and what they find rewarding. And knowing what your dog finds rewarding, can be useful for training and behavior modification. Engaging in enrichment activities can also help to mitigate behavioral concerns.

Enrichment should encourage your dog to explore, think, have fun, and to be a dog.

Enrichment should be interesting, engaging, stimulating, and challenging.

Sensory activities include smelling, tasting, touch, sight, and sounds. Smelling is particularly important for dogs. Try a scent walk aka a sniffari, a snuffle mat, the muffin tin game, a puzzle toy, the "find it" game, or take a nosework class with your dog. These are great ways you can engage your dog with their sense of smell and taste. Many of these activities also allow for dogs to forage, dissect, and experience different surfaces.

Games are a great way to engage with your dog. Try a game of fetch, use a flirt pole, play the "red light green light" game, hide and seek, or a game of chase.

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 like sit or down, a trick such as spin or bow, or dog parkour aka urban agility.

So, the next time your dog is doing something that dogs do, rather than trying to train them not to do that behavior, instead think of how you can allow your dog to engage in the behavior in an "appropriate" way.

Digging is a dog behavior. Rather than try to train your dog not to dig, instead provide an opportunity for them to dig. Pour sand in a baby pool, hide some toys, and allow your dog to dig there.

Shredding, ripping, and dissecting are dog behaviors. Simply wrap some treats or kibble in newspaper and let them shred the newspaper to get to the food.

Barking is a dog behavior. Try teaching your dog to "speak" or even "sing" with a harmonica or guitar. Allow them the opportunity to bark.

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