



# MENTAL ENRICHMENT

Working out our dog's brains is just as essential for meeting their needs as taking them for daily walks. Incorporating a variety of brain games to your daily routine can help your pup develop appropriate outlets for their normal dog behaviors (such as digging, searching, chasing, etc.), instead of developing their own brand of mental enrichment (some of which you may not like!).

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# HUNTING & SEARCHING GAMES

Most animals will choose to work for their food rather than have the food freely given to them - this concept is called "contrafreeloading" and it perfectly describes many of our dogs' preferences! Dogs, in general, are a species that prefer to work for their food when given a choice. Incorporating hunting and searching games for their food can be a great way to meet their needs and tire out their minds.

## NOSE WORK BOXES

- Place 5-6 boxes around the room with a treat in each one. Let your dog come into the room to find the treats. You can mix it up by moving the boxes around. As your dog gets the game, make it harder by only placing treats in some of the boxes & setting up the boxes in harder patterns. Have fun with it!



## SCAVANGER HUNT

- Toss kibble or treats out into the grass and have them find it. This is a simple way to deliver normal meals that takes longer and encourages sniffing!



## PUZZLE TOYS

- Puzzle toys ([like this one](#)) are a great way to get our dogs thinking! We recommend getting a few that you can rotate so that your dog does not become bored with any one toy. See the next page for more ideas!

## SNUFFLE MATS PUZZLE TOY

- A [Snuffle Mat](#) mimics grass. You can hide treats or kibble in the mat and have your dog search for their food.

Food puzzles help build confidence, frustration tolerance, and resilience. Licking is a naturally calming behavior for dogs. There are a variety of rubber toys on the market that you can stuff with food to keep your pup busy. We recommend a bit of a stockpile pre-stuffed and then frozen so they are ready to go when you need them.

HERE ARE SOME OF OUR FAVORITES:

## Make Your Own

- Muffin Tin - fill with kibble, with or without a cover.
- Egg Carton - cut in half or close for different difficulty.
- Toilet Paper Tube - cut some holes and close the end.
- Towel - scatter kibble on the ground and cover it up.
- Baby Food Jars - fill with peanut butter for licking fun.



## Shop - Kibble Feeders

- **Planet Dog Orbee Snoop**
- **Trixie Puzzle Boxes**
- Maze Bowls
  - **Outward Hound**
  - **JASGOOD**
- **Kong Wobbler**
- **SnuffleMat**
- **Nina Ottosson**
- **Soda Pup - Coffee Cup**

## Shop - Lickables

- **Kong Classic**
- West Paw (Pictured Above)
  - **Quizl**
  - **Toppl**
  - **Tux**
- **Top Paw Stuffers**
- **Soda Pup - Treat Holder**

## TIPS FOR FOOD PUZZLE SUCCESS:

**Start Slowly:** Pick an easy puzzle to start with to help your puppy/dog understand the game. Always observe your dog with any new toy to ensure he is playing with it appropriately.

**Kibble:** Start with dry dog food in the toy and allow your puppy/dog to work at his puzzle. Try to avoid helping him unless he is getting frustrated. You can also get his kibble wet and freeze it in his toy for more difficulty. Feed him his regular meals in the puzzle toy to turn meal time into enrichment!

**Stuffings for Lickables:** Some of our favorite stuffing foods are peanut butter, whole yogurt, cottage cheese, dehydrated dog foods, fruits and veggies, canned fish (in water), meat baby food, wet dog food - and any combination blended up together! Always research first to determine the dog safety of your selected food. Freezing your toy after you stuff it is a great way to create longer-lasting fun!



[Click here for more ideas on stuffing and layering!](#)

Sometimes dogs need a bit of help learning how to work a food puzzle all the way through. If your pup is always leaving a Kong unfinished, this can be frustrating for them, and ultimately is not giving you both the full benefit of the food puzzle toy! Here are some ideas for getting your dog used to working their Kong (or other lickable toy) all the way to the bottom! Additionally, if your dog gets easily frustrated with the deep Kong toys, try the West Paw Toppl for a slightly easier challenge.

## Teach Your Puppy To Work A Kong



### START SIMPLE



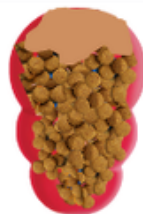
When first starting out, our goal is for your puppy to be successful! Give your puppy an appropriately sized Kong halfway full with some food or treats. When removing the Kong, trade your puppy a treat.

### SEMI-SOLID



After your puppy can work for kibble inside, you can add a semi-solid like peanut butter! Spread it on the outside lip of the Kong for easy access!

### STUFFING FULL



When your puppy is working for kibble and peanut butter, increase use of your semi-solid! Spread the peanut butter along the rim and inside of the lip.

### START FREEZING



When your puppy can easily work a stuffed Kong, place it in the freezer! As your puppy gets smarter and starts finishing quickly, you can mix your semi-solid with the kibble before freezing to increase the difficulty.



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Thanks to our friends at [Pawsitive Futures](http://PawsitiveFutures.com) for letting us use their awesome graphic!

# BRAIN & BODY ACTIVITIES

Brain & Body activities are the best of both worlds! Sometimes you need the most bang for your buck and need to wear out both your dog's body and their mind at once. These activities will help you meet both needs for your dog in one shot.

## DECOMPRESSION WALKS

Sometimes you just need to get out into nature and explore, and so does your dog! A decompression walk is a great walk to reset the mind by just letting your dog sniff and explore an area with low traffic. It is also a great time to reward those auto check-ins and practice your recall skill! Here are a few tips to help your sniffari be a fun adventure for you and your pup.

- Decompression walks are best in natural area with as few triggers as possible.
- Ideally on a long-line or off-leash. If you are using a long-line, clip the long-line to the back clip of a harness if possible & practice leash handling skills for safety.
- While your dog is sniffing, try not to "pester" too much with constantly calling them back to you or asking them to engage with you. Let them sniff! Save those cues for emergency redirects.
- Even if you can't do this type of walk every day, add it to your routine when you can!



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Learn More About Decompression Walks and some of our favorite spots to take your dogs on a sniffari [here](#).

## SHORT TRAINING SESSION

- Teaching your dog something new or practicing a known skill is a great way to burn some mental energy! There are a number of skills that you can practice, like recalls, that will also burn some physical energy as well. Remember to keep your training sessions brief, focusing on one skill at a time.

Not sure what to train? This [video playlist](#) has some great ideas!



## FLIRT POLE

- A [Flirt Pole](#) can help engage your dog's natural prey drive in a structured environment. If we can meet that need to chase, they may not feel the need to find other critters to chase on their own. [Here](#) is great video on play and training with a flirt pole.



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### **100 Days of Enrichment**

[Click here](#) for a fantastic blog resource with so many more enrichment ideas!