



ENVIRONMENTAL ENRICHMENTS

A LITTLE PLANNING CAN HELP YOUR
DOG
STAY OUT OF A LOT OF TROUBLE

Wouldn't it be great if our dogs came with an "off" switch? We could work long hours without guilt, stay out as late as we please and even hold dinner parties while the dog was simply stored in a back room. Unfortunately, life is never that easy. Besides, what seems to make us love our dogs the most is exactly what can cause us the most problems in caring for them; INTELLIGENCE. Dogs are so intelligent and adaptable that they have evolved to become mankind's closest animal helpers and companions. Ignoring your dog's need for mental stimulation can lead to excessive barking, destructive chewing or even obsessive, compulsive behaviors. Below is an in-depth list of environmental enrichments that can be given to your dog as "projects" to occupy her mind when need be. These tips are great to use while you are at work, gone shopping all day, on car trips, while you are entertaining guests or even during times when you just need a little time-out from your dog. ❖= Available at Alpha Canine Academy.

- 1) **STUFFED AND FROZEN KONGS** – Kongs take time to manipulate and empty. They come in various sizes and are made of durable rubber. There is even a special Kong made for aggressive chewers. Please ask ACA for recipes for stuffing your Kong. ❖
- 2) **KONG ON A BUNGEE** – Tie a length of bungee rope to a tree limb or clothes line and attach a Kong just at your dog's nose level. Stuff the Kong. This is a very entertaining option.
- 3) **TREAT BALLS** – Toys that dispenses kibble, treats or Cheerios a few at a time as it is rolled around the floor. You can even put your dog's meals in this. Examples include :
 - a) The Kibble Nibble by Premiere
 - b) Amaze-a-Ball
 - c) Tricky Treat Ball ❖
 - d) Buster Cube

- 4) **TUG-A-JUG BY PREMIERE** – Put treats inside. Your dog can see and smell the treats but must figure out how to get the treats out. ❖
- 5) **STUFFED STERILIZED BONES** – Same idea as the stuffed Kong with the added benefit that most dogs like to continue to chew it after the goodies inside have been eaten. Freezing the bone will make it last longer. ❖
- 6) **PRE-STUFFED BONES** – Same as above, of course, but these bones come pre-stuffed with beefy, cheesy, bacony or peanut buttery flavors.
- 7) **FROZEN BUTCHER BONES** – These come with the marrow still in the bone and with bits of fat and gristle attached. Some dogs find these to be too rich for their systems.
- 8) **FROZEN CHUNKS OF APPLE OR CARROT** – A healthy option and great to chew. If your dog pulls up her nose at these at first reintroduce them 4 or 5 more times before giving up.
- 9) **GO FIND GAME** – You will need two people for this game; kids are particularly good at this. As you hold your dog's collar, have the participant show her a yummy treat and then run off to "hide" the treat in a close, obvious place. Your participant should stay by the treat. Do not hide the treat completely yet; we are trying to help your dog get the concept of "go find" first. Release the dog as you say, "Go Find". If she is confused at first, have the participant call to her. As your dog gets the hang of this, have the participant place the treat in increasingly more hidden places. When your dog becomes good at this, you can have her go find things in other rooms. Place the treats in obvious places at first and then in more hidden places. Once the game has been fully learned, you can hide a half dozen treats in various places before leaving the house. As you leave, tell your dog to "Go Find" and she will occupy herself for a long time searching for treats.
- 10) **KONG TIME** – This device holds 4 stuffed Kongs and releases them over a 4-hour or 8-hour period for your dog to enjoy. Dogs with separation anxiety often benefit from this device.
- 11) **BACKYARD SAND BOX** – Cut two 2 X 6 X 8's in half and nail together to form a sandbox. Fill with sand. You can use this to hide treats and favored toys so that your dog can look forward to digging for "treasure" later.
- 12) **RAWHIDES** – Choose compressed rawhides, twists, chips or strips. Stay away from the sort of rawhides with knots on the ends. The knots can be chewed off and swallowed, causing intestinal blockage. Dogs benefit greatly from chewing rawhides. It relieves stress, occupies their time and cleans teeth.

13) **HIDE-a-TOYS** – These are soft toys that hold several small stuffed toys inside. Many dogs find it very entertaining to pull the little toys out one by one. Examples include Hide-a-Squirrels, Hide-a-Birds, Hide-a-Bee, Puzzle Pup and IQube. These toys are appropriate for non-destructive chewers only or for use under supervision. ❖

14) **PUZZLE TOYS** – These are toys that have spaces for treats or are hollow and can be stuffed.

- a) Spherecon ❖
- b) Kong Biscuit Ball
- c) Preimere Twist 'n Treat
- d) Kong Goodie Bone ❖
- e) Nylabone Rhino Cone
- f) Nylabone Rhino Stuff & Chew
- g) Hol-ee Mol-ee
- h) Kong Stuff-a-Ball

It is best to choose a number of environmental enrichments; that way you can rotate them and give your dog a wide variety of challenges and puzzles to occupy her mind. Pick the items up each day to ensure that they do not become too familiar and boring to your dog.

A little planning and preparation can help your intelligent dog stay out of trouble with challenging and mind-stimulating projects. Think outside the box and you may be able to add many more environmental enrichments to this list.

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