

# Canine Enrichment



DOGGEDLY TRAINING  
*helping your dog to be it's best*

## Meeting physical, mental and emotional needs



This can sometimes be challenging, especially if your dog needs restricted exercise due to a health issue or other issues that prevent you taking them out for walks. Below are some ideas that should help to meet your dog's needs in most circumstances.

*Remember:* All dogs are individuals and so just like humans they have preferences for certain activities over others. If your dog has any conditions certain activities may be difficult or uncomfortable for them.

*Important:* Your dog may become over aroused with exciting activities. If they get too excited it is good to take a break or do some calm reward-based training with them.

## Training

Toys can be given as training rewards for exercises that your dog is familiar with (i.e. 'sit' or 'stay') through to newly-introduced cues and exercises.

Training sessions should be short and away from distractions if possible.

Training should always be fun for both the dog and the owner, and dogs should be set up to succeed.

There are plenty of training resources available on the internet if you look.

## Toys

*Note:* Dogs can become bored of toys if they are always the same ones. Rotate available toys by splitting them into different boxes/bags and use a different set each time to ensure they remain interesting.

- 🐾 Try teaching your dog a name for some of their toys. While they are playing with a particular toy, teach them the name of this by saying 'ball' for example. It is important to be consistent with the name. Soon your dog should start to associate the word with the toy.
- 🐾 Then ask them to pick the toy up by saying the name 'ball', before praising your dog for doing as you asked.
- 🐾 Start to do that with several other toys over a few days (ensure that the names of toys sound quite different).
- 🐾 Ensure all the toys are accessible and ask your dog to fetch specific ones. Always praise for correct choices.

### *Toy Ideas (Free)*

- Roll up an old towel/tea towel and tie a knot in the centre so that it can be used as a tug toy.
- Use an empty plastic bottle with the lid removed, if safe for them.

*(If your dog chews items up always bear in mind safety)*



## Tug Games

*Note:* Tug games are great fun but your dog needs to know the rules from the start.

- 🐾 Before playing ensure that your dog is successful with 'take it' and 'leave it' cues, so that the game is played safely.
- 🐾 Regularly allow your dog to 'win' the item, and then you can engage them in another game of tug when they return this to you.
- 🐾 If the dog works their mouth up the toy and makes contact with your hand, drop the toy and walk away. This is so that your dog learns that using their mouth appropriately results in more fun, whereas using their mouth inappropriately has boring outcomes.
- 🐾 If the dog needs some help calming down after a tug game, give them a calming chew activity or rewarding training session.

## Search Games

Teach your dog to find a hidden toy.

- 🐾 Place your dog behind a stairgate or ask someone else to gently hold their collar
- 🐾 Whilst your dog watches, hide the toy under an upturned plant pot, cup or anything that can be easily knocked over.
- 🐾 Allow the dog to approach, and as they sniff and paw the pot, praise them and turn the pot over if necessary.
- 🐾 Add a second empty pot and allow your dog to show you (by sniffing and pawing) the pot which has the item inside. Again, praise them when they get this right.
- 🐾 Add a third pot and repeat so that your dog becomes familiar with the game.
- 🐾 If your dog chooses the wrong pot, just don't respond.

The game can be varied so that it is done with various toys and pots, and in various parts of the home and/or garden.

## Hide and Seek

- 🐾 Wait until the dog is not paying attention to you and then hide behind a large piece of furniture or tree, before calling their name. When your dog finds you, reward this success by praising them and engaging them in a toy game.



## Destruction

Does your dog love to chew or destroy items?

- 🐾 There are a range of non-food chews available for dogs (Nylabone®, Kong's® and commercial tree roots)
- 🐾 Chews do need to be carefully selected to avoid risks associated with choking and splintering. Dogs do need to be supervised when they have access to a chew in case they splinter, or break into choke-sized pieces, which should be removed straightaway.
- 🐾 Cardboard (old boxes etc. are good for dogs to chew and destroy, although should only be given in small quantities for dogs that may eat them (kitchen or toilet rolls etc.). Cardboard boxes can contain high-value toys, or shredded paper/balls of waste paper and toys.

## Find It

- 🐾 Place your dog behind a stairgate or ask someone to gently hold their collar.
- 🐾 Show them their toy and stay in sight whilst you hide it behind a cushion or piece of household/garden furniture.
- 🐾 Then release the dog to find the item. Say 'find it' as they search for it, and praise them when they find it.
- 🐾 Practise by hiding the toy in various areas which will be easy for your dog to find, and don't move onto more challenging areas until your dog is successful at this level.

This can be a very useful game as it can be developed into a 'where are my keys' game. The process is the same as above, apart from the keys need to be made easy for your dog to pick up (by attaching a soft key chain perhaps), and you can introduce a specific cue such as 'find my keys'.

## Fetch

Choose an appropriately-sized ball or soft toy to suit your situation.

- 🐾 Throw the item and allow the dog to chase it. When they pick it up, call them back and praise them for returning, before throwing it again straight away.
- 🐾 If they are reluctant to return to you with the toy, introduce the game calmly and initially just drop the toy and encourage them to give it back to you (using praise and/or high-value food treats).
- 🐾 Then do this gently tossing the toy away from you at gradually-increasing distances.
- 🐾 If they are reluctant to release the toy, encourage them by having several identical or equal value toys and throw one in the opposite direction as soon as the first toy is picked up.



## Water Games

Maybe plan for when you are in the garden!

- 🐾 Experiment by offering your dog a shallow washing up bowl on the floor, and then allowing them to dip their paws, nose or head in.
- 🐾 Float a dog toy (that they can pick up) or non-hazardous sized ice cubes in the water and then allow them to retrieve the item.
- 🐾 If they are familiar with a 'find it' or similar cue, use this.
- 🐾 If you have the space, provide them with a water-filled sandpit or paddling pool. Toys or ice cubes can be placed in this. If your dog is cautious of the water, start off with this very shallow and then gradually increase the depth as their confidence grows.
- 🐾 Some dogs enjoy running through garden sprinklers.



*Note:* If you encourage your dog to use a paddling pool, they will not understand if you do not want them to use this if children are using it. So, be consistent regarding if they are or aren't allowed to use this.



## Digging

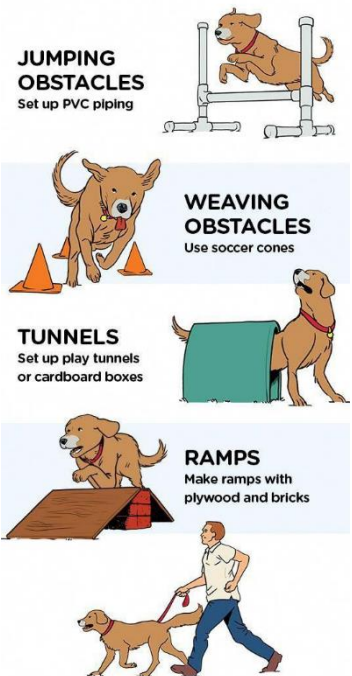
May be not welcome in your gardens! Instead, set aside a designated digging area. This could be a size-appropriate sandpit, bucket or wooden crate without splinters sunk into the ground.

- Encourage your dog to dig for buried 'treasure'. To do this, show them a toy that they like, and then partially bury it in the digging pit. As they become skilled at finding the treasure, bury it deeper.

## Indoor/Garden Obstacle Course

Agility or obstacle courses can be great fun in the home or garden and encourage focus.

- Plan an obstacle course based on items you already own; these could be chairs or table legs to go under or weave around, a blanket draped over a garden or coffee table as a tunnel, a broom handle (propped on a small stack of books or bricks either end) to create a mini-jump, a hula-hoop for jumping through, obstacles to weave around and a mat for sitting on. The possibilities are endless so be inventive!
- Decide on a sensible layout which allow your dog to move around them comfortably and away from breakable items or hazards.
- Introduce your dog to each piece of equipment individually, by luring them to use these using a food or toy treat.
- Make this fun and praise them for success.
- Introduce two elements of your obstacle course (that will naturally flow) together; then a third element etc.
- Only add extra elements when your dog has consistently mastered the previous stage.



Although dogs thrive on routine, many dogs also enjoy an element of novelty when it comes to enrichment. Regularly introduce novel enrichment, and rotate the activities that they enjoy.

Ensure that your dog has opportunity to rest throughout the day, in addition to them engaging in stimulating activities at times.

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Doggedly Pet Services

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