



## ENRICHING YOUR DOG'S LIFE

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Your dog is a living, breathing animal that relies on you for almost literally everything (food, water, shelter, play time, potty breaks...). Taking care of your dog's physical and mental enrichment is part of being a dog owner.

Dogs that get enough mental and physical exercise are going to be happier and healthier. Happier and healthier dogs are less likely to have behavioral issues down the road.

*So what do we mean when we say enrichment? Enrichment is adding something to your dog's life that makes it more interesting. Some enrichment only takes a few minutes on your end, other is an hours-long endeavor for both you and your dog.*

### **Physical Enrichment**

Many modern dogs spend all day at home, either alone or with a companion. Getting them enough physical exercise is key to their physical health and mental well-being. Examples of good physical enrichment include:

- Walking, running, and hiking. Let your dog stop and sniff. This gives you the two-for-one of letting your dog engage his nose. This is mentally tiring for dogs!
- Fetch and Tug. Just a few minutes per day of these games is good for most dogs. Incorporate regular breaks to keep your dog from getting too worked up.
- Swimming. This is a great way to tire dogs out that's easier on their joints. Ensure that your local watering hole allows dogs and is safe for swimming. Use a lifejacket for your dog to stay safe!
- Daycare. This isn't for every owner OR every dog. Many dogs find daycare stressful or overwhelming, and the cost alone keeps many owners away.
- Dog Sports. Look into things like scentwork or nosework, urban herding, rally obedience, flyball, Barkour, Doggie Dancing, dock diving, or agility.

### **Mental Enrichment**

Don't neglect your dog's brain! Engaging your dog's brain is another great way to wear him out and keep him sharp. Things like training or walking with time for sniffing (see above) can double as physical and mental exercise.

- Puzzle Toys. There are tons of products out there, like CleverPet and the Kong Wobbler, that are made to get your dog some mental and physical exercise while he earns his dinner.

- Search or Find-It Games. Hiding treats around your home or tossing them into long grass is a great way to engage your dog's sense of smell. This is pretty tiring for most dogs and very easy for you!
- Training. Aside from dog sports (see above), there are plenty of other ways to tire out your dog physically. Go to a group class or try writing out 15 fun or functional tricks for your dog to learn. Put them in a jar and pull one out per week for daily 5-minute training sessions.

### **Create a Plan**

Just the act of writing down a plan will help set it in motion. Come up with a plan of 3 different physical or mental exercises that you'll do for your dog every day. This can be as simple as two ten-minute walks per day plus a puzzle feeder while you're at work. Try to stick to this goal for 30 days. It's a great way to bond with your dog and create healthy habits for both of you!