

# Enrichment



## WHAT IS ENVIRONMENTAL ENRICHMENT?

Enrichment is used to provide a more complex environment for dogs. We can manipulate their enclosure (your home) to set your dog up for the following benefits:

- liberation of choice
- maintain natural behaviours
- stimulate their senses
- look forward to an enjoyable routine
- break routine with something delightful or a good brain exercise.

It is an invaluable aid for looking after their mental health and can prevent problem behaviours that develop as a consequence of boredom. With a balanced program of training, exercise and environmental enrichment, you give your dog the best chance of being all they can be.

## IDEAS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL ENRICHMENT:

**POSITIVE TRAINING SESSIONS** Providing fun learning sessions using a clicker, food and praise can deepen your bond and also help reinforce efficient behaviours.

**DOG SPORTS** Contact your local club to find out what sports and activities are available and if your dog is suitable.

**PLAY DATES** Play dates with other friendly dogs and their owners (organised in your home or out for a loose lead walk together) provides positive social canine interactions.

**ROUTINE WALK** A walk at the same time of day allows your dog to anticipate the outing and therefore they look forward to it.

**WALK AT A DIFFERENT TIME TO USUAL**  
This provides a positive break in routine.

**WALK A DIFFERENT ROUTE** This provides a whole new range of smells for your dog to discover.

**A SMELL WALK** Rather than just physical exercise, let your dog's nose lead the walk. There will be a lot of stopping and starting, however this will provide an enjoyable sensory walk for your dog.

**A DIGGING PIT** Fill a large plastic shell with sand and hide their favourite toys or treats wrapped in paper.

**TUNNELS** Cat or childrens backyard tunnels can provide fun when playing chase in the backyard and provides another place to hide treats and toys (for hunting).

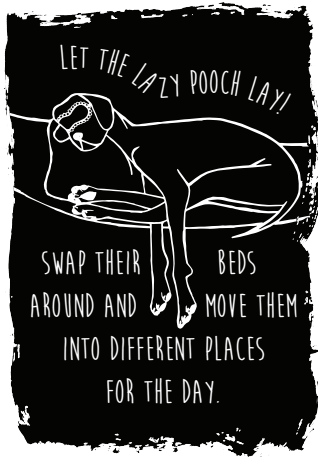
**BIKE TYRES** These make fun food games when they are hung from a tree with food (wet dog food, peanut butter or low fat cottage cheese) smeared on the inside.

**DVD FOR YOUR DOG** There's a range of DVD made just for your dog that can be found in your local petstore or online. There are CDs available too.

**COMMERCIAL FOOD PUZZLES** These can be bought from your local pet store or online. There's a large range so make sure you enquire as to which one will best suit your dogs breed and personality.

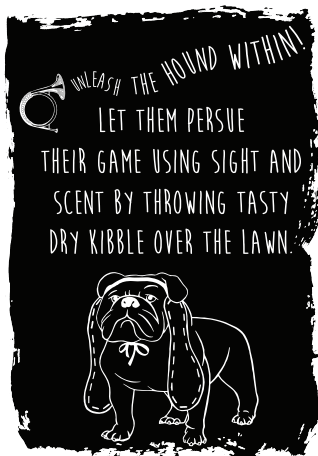
**WATER FUN** From swimming to wading in a shallow plastic pool to a sprinkler in the backyard, in the warmer weather, water provides oodles of fun. Supervision is recommended for any wading or swimming.

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## Let The Lazy Pooch Lay

It is important to allow our dogs to make choices for themselves. We can do this by providing several beds for them- at least one in the shade, one in the sun and another that is shielded from the elements. And if they are an indoor dog, a few beds around the house will give them a place to lay when they follow you from room to room. We can take this complexity a step further by switching their beds around on random days. This simple act creates a change to their usual environment and is a good brain exercise for your dog.



## Unleash The Hound Within

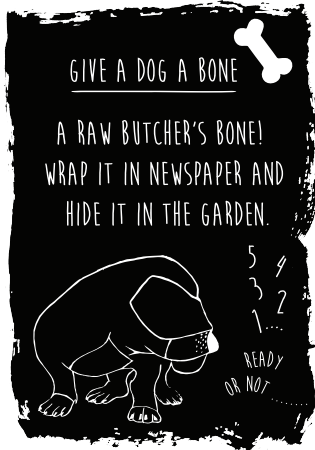
For this exercise, either use tasty dry kibble or (if your dog is used to being fed in a bowl) something tastier to begin with, like diced roast chicken (flesh only; no bones). They will forage for their food using their nose first which will get your dog's nose working the way was made to do.



## Old Herbs

A dog uses its nose to investigate the world. To even begin to understand what this means, we need to stop what we're doing, look around where we are and wonder what it would be like if everything we see had its own distinct scent. And that scent can tell you who and when something was touched. Furtherly, imagine the scent of all these things constantly gets renewed in your nose, e.g. your perfume smells just as strong to your dog throughout the day as when you first put it on in the morning. We can use this information to manipulate their environment for enrichment purposes. Throwing herbs out over the lawn suddenly changes the aroma of the garden for the whole day for your dog. This simple act is good for sensory stimulation.

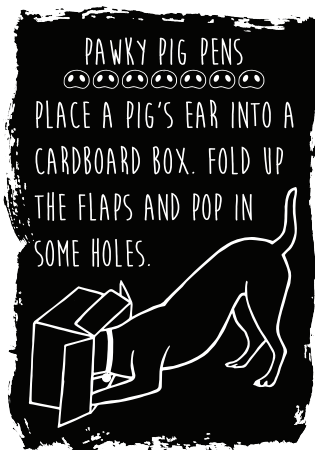
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## Give A Dog A Bone

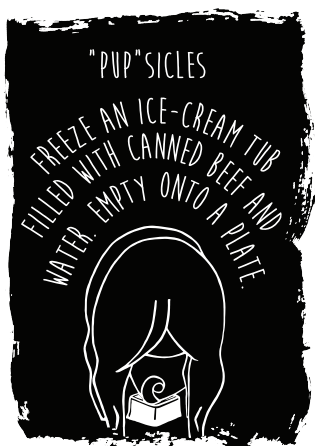
Introduce raw bones slowly to your dog's diet and keep them under supervision the first few times. When picking out bones, make sure it is raw and still has attached a thin layer of meat or ligament; no sharp parts that could puncture the mouth or splinter off, e.g. a small chop, t-bone or a fish bone. The bone you choose should be big enough that your dog cannot fit the entirety into their mouth (to prevent

accidentally swallowing). Should your dog become constipated, reduce the frequency of bones. If you have a puppy, offer them raw carrots to chew on. On occasion, present the bone to your dog, wrap it into some newspaper (never use a bag) or pop it into a cardboard box and hide it around your home or yard. This allows your dog to use their innate tracking skills, provides an enjoyable treat and assists in healthy gums.



## Pawky Pigs

With a little imagination, we can use household objects to create food puzzles for our dogs, e.g. wedging tasty treats like dried pig ears, chopped up cheese, dental sticks, raw bones etc. into cardboard boxes (cereal boxes, fruit boxes, appliance boxes to name a few) or into cardboard rolls (from toilet rolls, paper towels rolls, empty wrapping paper rolls). It is important the boxes have holes punctured in them, so the dog always has ample access to air. Supervision is required for the first few times to make sure they do not eat the cardboard. Keep in mind, some dogs will enjoy tearing the box apart and you can either let them for further enrichment purposes, or take the box from them once they have retrieved their treat.



## "Pup"sicles

Freezing canned food like dog food or canned tuna (plain flavour) or doggy biscuits into ice-blocks is ideal for those hot days in the warmer months, but it is also suitable on a random nice day. You can use empty ice-cream containers, plastic biscuit holders, pasta containers, milk cartons to name a few. This exercise is not just about cooling them down, but it is also about presenting food in a different form to increase the complexity of their environment and provide a different sensory food experience.