

# ENRICHMENT

*A Guide by Free Thinking K9*

## What is enrichment?

Enrichment is the “act of improving something by adding something else”. For our purposes, that means enrichment is the process of improving your dog’s life by adding a variety of different activities into their day! Enrichment is a NEED for our dogs if you want them to be happy, healthy, and well-behaved. Even though enrichment is a daily part of owning a pet, it does not have to be difficult or time consuming!

## Why should I do enrichment?

Enrichment is as much for you as it is for your dog! Enrichment can be used to help reduce concerning behaviors and replace them with more desirable ones. While we may love our dogs as members of the family, they are animals with natural instincts and needs that we must meet for their health and well-being. By proactively meeting those needs through enrichment, both you and your dog can enjoy a better relationship, lower stress, and fewer problem behaviors.

## Categories of Enrichment

### Physical Health

- Veterinary
- Hygiene
- Diet/Nutrition
- Physical Exercise

### Mental Health

- Social Interaction
- Mental Exercise
- Independence
- Calming
- Choice/Agency

### Environment

- Safety/Security
- Instinctual Behaviors
- Foraging
- Sensory Stimulation

## Where should I start?

There are amazing resources on building a comprehensive enrichment plan for your dog! We highly recommend *Canine Enrichment for the Real World* by Allie Bender and Emily Strong. By incorporating enrichment from each of the three categories above into your dog's daily routine, you will be well on your way to meeting their needs!

The great news is that many enrichment activities target multiple areas at once! Here is a list of enrichment activities that we recommend trying out with your dog to find out what they like best! Not all enrichment will be a good fit for every dog. Remember, variety is key to good enrichment, so make sure you are finding ways to shake up the routine. If you would like help addressing a specific problem behavior with enrichment, please reach out to us, we would be happy to help you brainstorm some options specifically for your dog!

### Food-Related Enrichment

- Frozen lick mat/kong (pumpkin, yogurt, peanut butter, wet dog food)
- Frozen chews/treats (frozen homemade dog ice cream, pupsicles, frozen kibble, etc.)
- Scatter feed (inside or out)
- Snuffle mat
- Box filled with toys/newspaper and some kibble
- Kibble wrapped in a towel
- Hide and seek for kibble
- Kibble in plastic bottle or paper bags
- Food stuffable toys (Kongs, Toppls, LickiMats, snuffle mats, treat ball dispensers like Kong Wobbler, etc.)
- Treat trails
- Busy boxes (may contain toys, chews, kibble, anything your dog enjoys!)
- Chewing (bully sticks, tendons, beef pig or rabbit ears, sweet potato chews, tripe twists, trachea, carrots, raw bones, antlers, yak cheese chews, fish skins, wood chews-consult with a vet and be sure to supervise!)
- Food puzzles (these range in complexity, find the right level of challenge)

### Non-Food Enrichment

- New toy in a wrapped box or boxes within boxes
- Holey roller ball stuffed with fabric
- Shredding/ripping (newspaper, cardboard, lettuce or cabbage, toilet paper rolls, soft toys, fleece)
- Sniffy walks
- Dog play dates
- Playing with toys (tug, fetch, keep away)
- Digging (dig pit, designated spot in the lawn)
- Hide and seek for you
- Finding toys that are hidden
- Bubbles
- "People watching" (sitting outdoors and watching the world go by calmly)
- Playing dog sports (agility, scent work, flyball, lure coursing, etc.)
- Training classes, for dogs that are comfy and happy to be there of course
- Trick training
- Canine fitness training and practice
- Visiting pet-friendly stores
- Cooperative Care