

6 Ways to Exercise Your Dog's Mind

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You may have experienced the surprise of coming home to find couch cushion stuffing everywhere except in the cushions, chewed table legs, and other destruction. If so, then you know the consequences of leaving a dog at home alone, bored, without sufficient mental stimulation. In many cases, incessant barking, digging, chewing, and other behavioral problems are signs of extreme boredom. Dogs need to be given activities to keep them occupied. Here are some ways to help your dog stay busy with pastimes that are interesting to dogs:

Teach Your Dog Some New Tricks

Work with your dog on learning some new tricks. With each new trick your dog learns, you are helping to strengthen his mental abilities. For dogs who are fearful or shy, training increases their self-confidence. It's also a great bonding activity for you and your dog. You'll also probably be delighted to discover that, with the right training methods and sufficient amounts of practice, your dog can learn almost any trick you're willing to teach.

Provide Plenty of Puppy Puzzles

Canine behaviorists suggest using puzzle games designed to provide mentally challenging activities for puppies left alone. The puzzles can alleviate boredom and help your dog maintain sufficient mental stimulation to keep him feeling alert and amused for hours. There is an abundance of problem-solving puzzle types, from challenges to open drawers, turn doorknobs, open lids, etc., to reach awaiting treats.

Install a Doggie Door

There are few changes you can make in your dog's life than liberating him from a life of waiting for someone to heed his appeals to come in or go outside. Providing your dog with his very own access to come inside and go outside freely, means a life of no longer being constantly stuck either inside or outside his home. It's a life-changing gift for you too. You'll be freeing yourself from the relentless task of opening and closing the door and having to make your dog wait at the door while you rush to complete some task.

Create Your Own Obstacle Course for Your Puppy

An excellent exercise for your dog's mental and physical health is also a fun trust-building activity for your dog and you. Just round up whatever you can find from your garage or house, and arrange some play obstacles of blankets, chairs, wide boards, old pillows, footstools, etc. With just a little verbal encouragement and a tiny treat placed a few obstacles away, your dog will quickly master the course. Add new obstacles, or replace some with new ones, as your dog becomes more familiar with the game.

Take Your Dog Along With You When Possible

Many dogs love to ride in the car, and all dogs love to be with their owners at all times. Wherever you are, that is where your dog's deepest senses of happiness, companionship, excitement, and security are. So, as often as possible, let your dog ride along with you when you're running a few errands, going to the carwash, etc. If you have a workplace that allows bringing your dog, maybe even give him or her a chance to fit in there. Why not make the most of having your dog as a great companion?

Adopt a Companion for Your Dog

Of course, the ultimate measure of effort to help your dog live his best life is to enrich it with a companion of his own species. The most meaningful change you can make for your dog is to make it possible for him to bond with another dog. Dogs are highly social, and their nature is to form very strong bonds with their owners and fellow canines. So, naturally, there is no substitute for the opportunity to be in the company of another dog.

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