



Playtime with your dog isn't just about fun and games—it also helps your dog stay mentally and emotionally healthy.

Plus, preventing boredom—especially if you live in a small space or are spending more time indoors lately—can help both of you maintain a happy home life.

Read on for some toys and activities that not only keep your dog's mind sharp, but also provide loads of entertainment for both of you!

Toys and Mental Enrichment for Your Dog

In addition to physical exercise, dogs need to exercise their mind. It helps them stay sharp and emotionally healthy, and can prevent certain boredom-associated behaviors like destructive chewing.

Plus, the feeling you get from watching your dog solve a puzzle or discover a new slice of the world is priceless—it's fascinating and heartwarming to observe their thinking process.

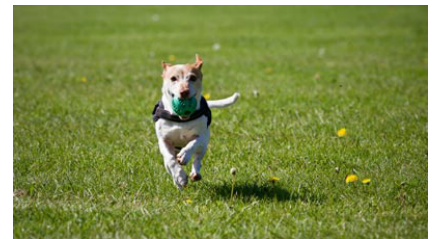
Here are some ways to exercise your pup's mind that can be fun for both of you...

Choosing Your Dog's Toys

Many dogs will pick a favorite toy. But, it's still good to have a variety for them to use.

Examples of some basic toy types include:

- Toys for fetch, such as balls or frisbees.
- A toy to baby or cuddle with.
- Thick rope toys for 'tug'.
- Sturdy toys that can stand up to your dog's chewing.



Of course, you can customize this list or add new types of toys based on your dog's personal preferences.

Also consider safety: If your dog tries to chew off and swallow pieces, they may need sturdier options rather than stuffed or less durable toys.

Puzzle Toys and Feeders

Puzzle feeders are a lot of fun, and they serve a dual purpose—they keep your dog entertained AND fed with kibbles or treats.

As dog lovers, we're fortunate to have many different puzzle feeder options to choose from nowadays, including:

- Tube-like toys for licking peanut butter or another treat out of the center.
- Snuffle mats that encourage your dog to use their nose to find treats.
- Objects for your dog to manipulate with their paws or nose, such as rolling balls or boards with levers.

With all the options out there, you can choose a feeder that just releases a few treats, or one that incrementally dispenses your dog's entire meal (in the latter case, just check that they're having fun and not experiencing a barrier to their dinner).

And, some feeders allow you to set the "difficulty" level based on your dog's abilities and interest.

Prefer a do-it-yourself option? I like your suggestion here. You can even make your own puzzle feeders...

For example, try...

- A muffin tin filled with tennis balls (with treats underneath some of the balls).
- Treats inside of a rolled-up towel.
- A toilet paper or paper towel tube filled with treats, with the ends folded or pinched closed.
- Put together one of these toys, then watch your dog have a blast getting to the treats!

One note, though: Don't let puzzle feeders spoil your dog's diet! If using treats, be sure it fits into their balanced nutritional plan.

Dogs on a diet—or any dog with an active mind, regardless of their diet—may also enjoy a puzzle toy. This is a similar concept to a puzzle feeder, but it's purely for play with no food involved.

The Joy of Novelty

Most dogs are naturally curious and interested in the world around them.

So, providing novel experiences for your adult dog can be a great form of mental stimulation.

Remember to engage as many of their five senses as possible. This can include...

- Visiting new places (such as a trail or park where they feel grass under their toes and hear birds in the trees, or hanging out at a dog-friendly café).
- Meeting new people and other well-socialized animals.
- Going on a car ride through a rural area where your dog can smell farm animals.
- Blowing dog-safe bubbles (they come in bacon and peanut butter flavors!) and letting your dog chase them.
- Creating a place in your yard for your dog to dig, and burying toys for them to find.

Bonus: When done at an appropriate pace, introducing your dog to new people, animals, places, and situations can help them become socialized and well-adjusted.

Just be sure to go slowly if your dog seems nervous at all, and try again another day if necessary. Introducing new things too fast can cause a dog to develop fearful tendencies.

Training and Games

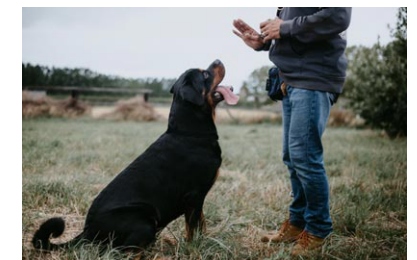
Dog training can be both functional and fun.

Many dogs enjoy the mental stimulation, and it keeps them from getting bored. Plus, learning will help keep their mind sharp.

Within the world of dog training, you have many options, including:

- Basic training and manners.
- Advanced training and fun tricks.
- Agility or obstacle courses (you can build them at home, too).

Also, look into teaching your dog games such as tag, hide-and-seek, or scavenger hunts (hide treats in the home or yard for your pup to find).



Join Your Dog for the Fun

Dogs are individuals with their own personalities, social tendencies, athletic abilities, and personal preferences. So, see what your dog likes best.

Remember to spend time with your dog during these activities as much as possible, too.

Joining your pup in a positive experience will help your bond of friendship grow even deeper, and create joyful memories for both of you.

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