

CREATIVE WAYS TO ENTERTAIN YOUR DOG

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Many dogs are under-stimulated and under-exercised, resulting in behavioral problems such as barking, digging, destructiveness, and all-around unruliness. If you have a pup that can be picky with their playmates, don't fret, there are plenty of ways to get them tired. These ideas can be great for young and athletic dogs that need some extra fun time.

Interactive Toys

Look for toys that keep your dog interested and active, such as toys that food is stuffed into. A dog will spend a lot of energy trying to get the food out. Types of toys like this are Kongs, Buster Cubes, Havaballs, Squirrel Dudes and many more.

You can also purchase sterilized, hollowed-out bones from any pet store and stuff these with peanut butter or cheese. Once your dog has become a chew toy champion, you can freeze them to make the food more challenging to get out.

You can also take rope toys, soak them in chicken broth, and freeze them for a tasty, chilling treat during the summer.

A pit ball is a large round ring with a large ball in the middle that many dogs love and will spend hours trying to push the ball around the ring. You can also find large balls with "handles" built into them so the dog can carry the ball around and throw it on his own.

If your dog is not destructive with stuffed animal-type toys, there are many new toys on the market that have smaller toys inserted within a larger one. The dog has to spend time trying to get the smaller ones out, which can be great fun.

Other Toys

Nylabones make great toys for dogs that like to chew. Galileo toys are also great for champion chewers of all types. Natural chews, such as rawhide and bully sticks, can be purchased but follow your vet's instructions when using these.

Always assess your dog's toys for their level of chewing. A dog that is an avid chewer should have toys made of sturdy, tough rubber with no little knobs or buttons that they can pull off and accidentally swallow. Some dogs will go nuts trying to tear squeakers or noisemakers out of toys, so you want to be sure that you supervise play with these toys and remove them when they get damaged so that the dog cannot eat the squeaker.

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Some dogs LOVE tennis balls. Always make sure you purchase the balls at a pet store. Regular tennis balls made for the sport contain harsh chemicals which allow them to bounce better on the court, and these chemicals can wear down a dog's teeth after years of chewing on them. Another good alternative is the hard rubber ball made by the Kong company.

Games

There are lots of fun games that you can play with your dogs. Fetch is a great game for dogs that love to chase things. Hide and Seek (in your yard or your house) is another helpful game in teaching dogs the "come" command. Teaching your dog tricks is one more activity that can stimulate your dog, and they're a lot of fun, particularly for children.

Some dogs love to search for objects. You can get a cardboard box and hide toys or treats in the box and let the dog work on tearing the box up to find a prize! Another game is to sprinkle food or treats throughout your backyard and let your dog search them out (particularly fun for scent hounds!). Dogs that enjoy digging will love a set-aside dirt area or a small sandbox with their toys or treats buried underneath.

Lots of dogs love water, and providing them with a small kiddie splash pool is lots of fun for the dog. If you have a pool, many dogs enjoy swimming and playing "fetch" in the pool.

Many dogs enjoy running an obstacle course, as can be seen with agility competitions. You can create your own agility course in your yard. Tunnels can be bought from children's toy stores, and you can make jumps cheaply and easily with PVC pipe from your local hardware store. You can also purchase agility equipment often for great prices from eBay!

We are always here to help! You can find additional behavior and training resources at pasadenahumane.org/behavior.

Adapted from Northeast Animal Shelter

