



THE DOGGY DIGEST

TRAINING TIPS BROUGHT TO YOU BY MUTTS WITH MANNERS

Enrich Yourself Pup!

When we think of enrichment, we usually think of a hyena interacting with a box on a zoological exhibit, or a sea turtle pushing a Boomer Ball around an aquarium. We usually don't think about the importance of enriching our dogs or cats. Our animal companions in the home actually need enrichment just as much as an animal in the zoo. We don't like thinking of our furry friends as captive animals, but they actually are.

What is enrichment, anyways? The Shape of Enrichment defines enrichment as 'a dynamic process for enhancing animal environments within the context of the animal's behavioral biology and natural history. Environmental changes are made with the goal of increasing the animal's behavioral choices and drawing out their species-appropriate behaviors, thus enhancing animal welfare (1999 AZA Behavior Scientific Advisory Group).

Enrichment is goal-driven and falls into one of five categories:

Food/Feeding

By making feeding time at home fun and challenging for your dog, it encourages him to think and work for his dinner. You can feed your dog his treats in task-oriented puzzle feeders like Kong's Stuff-a-balls, or just vary the food presentation by hiding food around the house and yard, or putting his food in a maze ball.

Social

Having a few of your dog canine buddies over for a play session, doggy daycare, and dog parks can meet the criteria for social enrichment.

Sensory

Your dog's olfactory nerve is the largest in his body. This may be one of the more fun categories to explore with him. Adding essential oils like vanilla, lavender, and peppermint has elicited positive results in our canine companions. For scent hounds, you may want to add in some scent training or tracking and purchase some animal scents from the local hunting store. Don't stop there, as long as a stimulus doesn't trigger your dog's fear response, you can use visual, auditory, and tactile forms of enrichment as well. Certain tempos of music can be soothing for your dog to listen to while you are away at work. Some dogs even love to watch T.V.

Manipulative/Physical...Toys

Teaches animals to explore and investigate items in their environments with their mouths, paws, legs, heads, and noses. Dog toys are a popular form of this category of enrichment, and there are so many on the market to choose from. Make sure they are safe and durable. Determine in a couple of supervised sessions if they are safe for your dog to be left alone with them before leaving for work. Balls, boxes, and burlap bags are quick forms of enrichment that fall into this category. For larger breeds, barrels can be a lot of fun to push around a backyard.

Cognitive/Mental

Teaching your dog something new will stimulate his mind and expend a form of energy that physical exercise just can't. Teaching him something new can be Sit, or something fun like Bang Bang or jumping through a hula hoop. We know that in humans we have to continue learning to keep our brains healthy, your dog is not any different. Enrolling in a local positive reinforcement training class can help get you started. We love to play a game called 101 Things To Do With A Box.

Enrichment will vary from species to species and from individual to individual. What a cat loves, a dog may find incredibly boring, and what one Labrador finds enriching, can be terrifying to another. So, spend some time and get to know your animals, as a group, then as individuals. This can be a fun and rewarding exercise for you and your dog to engage in together. Our lives are spent working, then coming home to an excited pooch. Then we leave for our evening engagement and come home to an even more excited doggy friend. Find ways to stimulate your dog every day. Walks are great, but if you can't fit that in, let your dog run a few errands with you if you don't have to get out of the car, see if he can spend a day at daycare, or take a quick romp to the beach.

Most importantly, have fun with this and keep it pawstive!
The Shape of Enrichment www.enrichm

Until next time, keep it pawstive!