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## Ways to keep your dog entertained

Keeping your dog entertained is also called enrichment. Good enrichment will provide a balance of both physical and mental stimulation. Mental enrichment is very effective at tiring & relaxing a dog.

Enrichment can include taking your dog out for a walk, a training session, or setting up an agility course in the yard. Or it can also include puzzle toys, biscuit balls or things to chew on: just make sure you vary it for your dog. I find toys are great for while you are home, but even better for when you are out. That way your dog may actually look forward to you going out, especially if it means they get their favourite toys and treats.

If you can keep your dog busy for 30 minutes when you leave the house you are much less likely to have problems with digging, destructive behaviour, barking, and separation anxiety.

When choosing appropriate enrichment for your dog consider the age and breed of your dog. Choose toys that are suitable and 'dog test' them in your presence before you leave the dog alone with them. Young dogs are likely to chew things up; that's ok, they need to do that! But just make sure those items they chew are safe and suitable.

If you have a high energy dog that likes to dig, instead of trying to stop the digging, provide your dog with an area to dig or a digging pit (such as a clamshell toy with sand). Encourage your dog to use this by hiding toys and treats in the digging area. If your dog likes to sniff things out then provide a treasure hunt of toys and treats.

Food motivated dogs are quite easy, though most dogs could benefit by having their first meal of the day when you go out. You can provide a bone or chewy treat, a biscuit ball or treat dispenser, and a kong dog toy filled with treats, tinned food or sardines. Stuffed kongs are very useful to give your dog when you have visitors or need to leave them outside for a while. There are various kong stuffing recipes online.

When you go out you may find your dog is happier with a radio left on & perhaps something that carries your scent; an old item of clothing or a towel or blanket that you have used before. And of the course assortment of their favourite toys and treats: Try having a family member walk the dog briefly or distract them whilst you set up their treasure hunt. You can then let them loose to play and eat while you can leave the house & know you are leaving your dog happy.

If your dog suffers from separation distress or anxiety, consult with your behaviourist or trainer.

For more information see our booklet 101 Ways to keep your dog entertained. We still have some paper copies available online or contact us about our ebook.

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