



What is a Kong™ and what is my dog meant to do with it?

Many puppy owners say they have a Kong™ for their puppies but don't always know how to maximise their use of it. The traditional Kong™ dog toy is a rubber toy. Its made by Kong™ dog toys though there are number of toys under the Kong™ brand. The traditional Kong™ dog toy is a beehive shape and comes in red, or black for the serious chewers. Puppy Kong™ are also available for young pups, but as it is a softer rubber you will need to watch for damage as your puppy grows.

The main purpose behind this toy is that it is designed for food dispensing. I like that it is reusable and can provide the dog with a great variety; as much as your imagination! When a dog or puppy is laying down chewing, serotonin is released by the brain. This has a calming effect on the dog and can be very useful for behaviour modification. The toy also enables them to problem solve by getting the food out; problems solving builds confidence and intelligence!

The Kong™ is useful to give to your dog when you go out, but don't just use it when you go out in case your dog starts to associate it with being left alone. The Kong™ should trigger anticipation from your dog and be an enjoyable experience. Especially if you provide a variety of foods for them to enjoy from the Kong™.

When you first introduce the Kong™ to your dog or puppy serve it around meal time with some tasty treats inside. At first make it easy to get the treats out. It may be so easy that the treats just fall out, but you can gradually make this harder. As you make it harder for your dog be there to help them out if they struggle or lose interest. Just remember if you are going to take it away from them to loosen it up (by squeezing it in your palms) then make sure you swap it with something valuable (such as sausage) so they don't feel threatened by you intervening. Praise them as you do this and give it back promptly so trust is built.

A variety of fillings can keep this toy interesting and tasty for your dog. Not to mention it can be as healthy or as unhealthy as you wish. Once a dog is used to the toy I like to layer it with fillings. You can start by pressing soft food into the smaller end. You can also plug the small end up so that it can be frozen with a portion of food (you can half fill it and then freeze it to last longer, & to keep your dog motivated fill the rest just prior to serving). After the first layer is pressed into the end I like to put something tasty such as natural yoghurt or cream cheese. I will then place a crispy treat such as air-dried tripe or dried liver before filling again with soft food. My dog loves cooked pumpkin, cooked sweet potato & mashed potato so I'll usually top up with this. Some people like to add fruit such as banana or mashed apple.

For young puppies start with a quality tinned puppy food, it's also ok to add a bit of natural yoghurt. To make it easy you could start with their puppy biscuits or air-dried food, then plug this up with a bit of tinned food to hold the dry food in. A small amount of cooked chicken and rice can also go down well; though beware of filling them up with this tasty treat as it's not a balanced food for them. Gradually as their stomach becomes more tolerant of new foods you can introduce more; but in the early stages don't mix and match too much and start with their recommended diet.



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For older dogs, tasty additions can include; peanut butter, sardines, muscles, grated cheese, leftover meats such as sausage, chicken & steak, and even cooked egg. You don't need to spend a fortune on premade fillers, just be aware of what foods are safe to give your dogs and what ones to stay away from. And to save time, have a few toys on hand so you can pack them the morning or evening before and store them in the fridge. Cool foods are going to be appreciated in summer, just as slightly warmed foods (such as a mixed mash of meat and cooked vegetables) will go down well in Winter. For more ideas search the internet for Kong™ stuffing recipes.

Article supplied by Sarah of Clever Creatures. For more information and to view our resources see www.clevercreatures.com.au