



AARCS
ALBERTA ANIMAL
RESCUE CREW SOCIETY

Dog Enrichment

What it is, and how we can use it:

Fulfilling your dog's natural behavioural needs is important. Dogs naturally want to sniff, tear apart things, dig, work for their food etc. If we can set up enrichment for our dogs to let these natural instincts out in a safe and productive manner, we can sometimes save our household goods from being destroyed, help tire our dogs out, and keep them busy as well as provide a source of entertainment and calm for busy dogs when exercise is not always possible. Enrichment helps build confidence in dogs and encourages them to problem solve for themselves, and provides mental stimulation.

Decompression and Enrichment

New dogs in care highly benefit from both exercise such as playing fetch, walking, running, as well as forms of mental enrichment. Getting the dog to problem solve can be quite rewarding for the dog and can help empower them to learn about their environment and build confidence. This can help in calming stressed, overactive dogs and build confidence in fearful or shy dogs.

Why We Use Food

Food is a primary reinforcer for all animals. We need food for sustenance to survive. High value treats such as chicken, cheese and beef liver can be broken down into tiny pieces and can be used quickly as a way to reinforce a dog's behaviour. Toys and praise may also be used, but can be limited if the dog either a) does not find them motivating enough or b) throwing a ball is the reward, but you have to wait for the dog to bring the ball back to practice a cue again, which can slow down training. Sniffing out and finding delicious treats in a puzzle toy can be quite exciting for dogs and quite rewarding as well.

Food Based Toys/Feeders

Food based toys/feeders come in many different shapes and sizes, ranging in difficulty from easy to more challenging. The easiest is peanut butter in a kong. Each toy has a different way to stuff in the treats, most are easily washable. It can be quite fun watching dogs figure out how to get the food inside.





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Games

Games can be quite fun to do with the whole family. This can include recalls, teaching tricks, hide and seek, x-pen mazes and other creative ways for our dogs to problem solve and use their brains.

Natural Behaviours

Dogs have a lot of natural behaviours that can come in conflict with people, such as digging, chewing, chasing and destroying. We can use these to our advantage in enrichment. We can create a digging pool with sand and their favourite plastic toys, or use our boxes from recycling, stuffing them with treats and letting the dog destroy them. Squeaker toys can be destroyed, and have the squeakers methodically taken out. Allowing our dogs to perform natural behaviours in controlled circumstances may allow that release that keeps harm to household goods at bay.

Sight/Sound

Sight and Sound are great tools to help socialize our dogs, as well as mentally stimulate them. Sitting at a park bench you can reward your dog as different people, cars, squirrels and dogs go by. Taking distance if your dog gets too interested and starts to jump/bark. Other things can include, blowing bubbles and teaching a nose or paw target on different surfaces. Other sounds can be played on devices such as youtube at low volume and paired with giving treats. Slowly increase the volume as your dog becomes more comfortable.

Scent

Any dog can be trained to use their nose. Yes! Even Bulldogs or flat faced breeds. Scent is a great enrichment opportunity for our dogs. After a long day at work our dogs often greet us by sniffing our clothes as well as our shoes. They can get so much information from scent alone. We can use this to our advantage by letting our dogs sniff on walks, bringing novel items home that may smell like something else (perhaps a towel from a rabbit cage), essential oils, or bringing the outdoors indoors, for the dogs that are on crate rest in particular.

Dog Enrichment Checklist

On the next page is a checklist that summarizes some enrichment activities that you can be working on with your dog while in care at AARCS. You can check off the boxes as you go along. Please feel free to print and reference this checklist as a guideline for enrichment activities.



Dog Enrichment Checklist

<p>Food Based Toys/Feeders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Snuffle Mats <input type="checkbox"/> Stuffed Kongs <input type="checkbox"/> Kong Wobbler <input type="checkbox"/> Slow Feeder Dish <input type="checkbox"/> Food Puzzles <input type="checkbox"/> JW Toppl <input type="checkbox"/> Squirrel Dudes <input type="checkbox"/> Omega Paw Tricky Treat Ball <input type="checkbox"/> Starmark Everlasting Fun Ball <input type="checkbox"/> Planet Dog Orbee Tuff Snoop <p>DIY Food Based (Stuff items with kibble or treats)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Muffin Tin <input type="checkbox"/> Ice cube tray <input type="checkbox"/> Toilet paper tubes <input type="checkbox"/> Assorted Boxes <input type="checkbox"/> DIY Licky mat (silicone mat with grooves) <input type="checkbox"/> Yogurt containers <input type="checkbox"/> Roll up an old towel or blanket and put treats inside <input type="checkbox"/> Peanut butter on a surface, end of a cup, on a frisbee <input type="checkbox"/> Crumpled Newspaper in a box with treats inside <p>Toy Stuffers (kongs etc.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Kibble <input type="checkbox"/> Soaked kibble and frozen <input type="checkbox"/> Canned dog food <input type="checkbox"/> Peanut Butter <input type="checkbox"/> Bananas <input type="checkbox"/> Yogurt <input type="checkbox"/> Dog treats <input type="checkbox"/> Apples <input type="checkbox"/> Pumpkin <input type="checkbox"/> Canned fish (boneless) <input type="checkbox"/> Cooked chicken <input type="checkbox"/> Hot Dogs <input type="checkbox"/> Bully Sticks 	<p>Games</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Hide-N-Seek with people, toys and food <input type="checkbox"/> Rapid Recalls <input type="checkbox"/> Round Robin Recalls <input type="checkbox"/> 101 Things to do with a box <input type="checkbox"/> The Bucket Game <input type="checkbox"/> Inside Obstacle Course <input type="checkbox"/> Outside Obstacle Course <input type="checkbox"/> Trick Training <input type="checkbox"/> X-Pen Mazes <p>Outside</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Sniffari (sniff walk) or Decompression Walk <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Agility <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jumping on benches/rocks - Different walking surfaces - Going under tables <input type="checkbox"/> Treat scatter in grass <p>Natural Behaviours</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Digging in sand in a plastic pool <input type="checkbox"/> Destroying cardboard boxes <input type="checkbox"/> Chasing a Flirt Pole <input type="checkbox"/> Destroying stuffed toys (Make sure to supervise incase they try to swallow) <p>Sight</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Blowing bubbles <input type="checkbox"/> Change of scenery <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching nose/paw target to yellow or blue <input type="checkbox"/> Different Objects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Seasonal wear - Different hats - Umbrellas - Snow shovels - Sleds - Bicycles - Scooters - Vacuum (off) 	<p>Scent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Essential oils (One Drop on a towel) *Not for use with cats or birds* <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vanilla - Peppermint - Rose - Valerian - Lavender - Sweet Orange <input type="checkbox"/> Bring the outside In <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fallen Branches - Bunny essence - Clothes worn outside <input type="checkbox"/> Snuffle Mats <input type="checkbox"/> Find-it! <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Treats hidden under cups - Treats hidden around house - Treat scatter in grass - One treat hidden in hand and the other empty <p>Sounds</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Birds Chirping <input type="checkbox"/> Rainforest <input type="checkbox"/> Ocean <input type="checkbox"/> Rain <input type="checkbox"/> Traffic <input type="checkbox"/> Construction <input type="checkbox"/> Cat/Dog Noises <input type="checkbox"/> Vacuum <input type="checkbox"/> Children Playing <p>*Please note, if your foster dog is on a specific diet from the vet team it is best to use what they have prescribed. Kibble can be scattered or soaked in hot water and stuffed into food dispensing toys, canned food can be spooned onto cookie sheets and baked to create small treats*</p> <p>*Pair all activities with food rewards*</p>
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Further reading and videos:

Instinct Dog Training - [Free course on Canine Enrichment](#)

Dog Decoder - [Leadership in Training](#)

Dogmantics - [Free Videos](#)

Huff Post - [Foster Dog Decompression](#)

Kristen Crestejo - [Scent Games and Nose Work for Dogs](#)

Puppy Culture - [Managing Littermate Interactions](#)

Pam's Dog Training - [Desensitize to Sound](#)

Puppy Leaks - [Canine Enrichment](#)

Sound Proof Puppy Training - [Phone App](#)

The Modern Dog Trainer - [Mental Stimulation](#)

IHeartDogs - [10 Clever Canine Enrichment Ideas](#)

Questions? Please feel free to email them to behaviour@aarcs.ca!