



Keeping your Dog's Environment Enriched for Life!

By Katie Bedrossian – Pet Behaviour Consultant

Did you know that mental enrichment is just as important as physical exercise for your dog?

It is also just as important for senior dogs as it is for puppies.

Mental enrichment can:

1. Calm and tire puppies and adolescents more than physical exercise alone.
2. Reduce inappropriate behaviour motivated by exploration, investigations, smells, sounds, sights and boredom.
3. Slow down meals hence reducing the chance of gastric dilation (a medical emergency where severe stomach bloating occurs) and cause high food drive dogs to feel more satisfied.
4. Reduce the incidence and severity of canine dementia.
5. Increase bonding through mutual enrichment activities and through dog owning satisfaction.

Top 5 easy ways to mentally enrich your dog's life

1. Replace the food bowl with 4-6 different food dispensing methods. There are various toys for this, but you can also use slow feeder bowls, muffin trays, soft drink bottles (supervised) and simple scatter feeds on grass. Rotate to increase mental enrichment.
2. Take a different walking route. This can be as simple as going the opposite direction or walking on the other side of the road to your usual route.
3. A room with a view. This works for dogs that like to just sit and watch. For dogs that bark at passersby (people or dogs) or other things outside, block visuals with static attach window frosting.
4. Digging pit (or ball pit or IDig indoor digging pit). A digging pit is essential for dogs that like to dig in your garden, but most dogs will dig given the chance. Why not



provide a sand pit for your dog? If your dog is young and not yet digging, it may even prevent digging in the wrong spot happening in the first place.

5. Scent games. This can be with food, toys, people or material with scents sprayed on them. Hide these items and leave your dog to use their nose to find them. If you are just starting out, place them within a 2m square area, then branch out. Try to hide while your dog is elsewhere.

While physical and mental exercise are important parts of a holistic behaviour plan, there are many other components. If you are experiencing behaviour challenges with your dog (young or old) please book an appointment with our Pet Behaviour Consultant, Katie Bedrossian, for a more thorough behaviour assessment and plan.