

Play and Prey types

Normal behaviour exhibited by all canines that are associated with prey drive include : **searching, stalking, chasing, grabbing and killing.**

Not all dog play involves each of these.

These are all hunting behaviors related to survival: finding, approaching, catching, and killing dinner.

All canines will exhibit these behaviors, however some breeds will exhibit certain traits stronger than others.

These behaviors are instinctual in all canines and therefore impossible to train out.

We must find healthy outlets for these behaviors in the form of games and enrichment activities in order to prevent behavior problems later on.

At home we most commonly see these behaviours: **diggers, chasers, yankers & pullers, and chewers.**

The importance of enrichment

It is commonly understood that physical activity is critical to a dog's health, but the importance of mental stimulation as a contributor to overall well-being is less commonly understood. Thanks to the study of canine behavioural science in recent decades, it is now known that dogs need both their bodies and minds engaged on a daily basis. This mental stimulation is often referred to as "enrichment."

Enrichment is a tool that we can use to make our dog's life and surroundings more enjoyable and engaging. We provide this by offering them a wide range of things to do while we're not at home. We can also utilise enrichment during feeding, exercise, social and play times.

Enrichment activities help your dog problem-solve, learn more efficiently and increase confidence and burn energy.

Canine 'enrichment' improves your dog's mental capacity and enhances his relationship with you and his understanding of the world around him. Enrichment goes beyond basic play to activities, puzzles and technology created specifically to challenge a dog's mind and exercise them mentally and physically. **It is a topic so diverse it has been broken into 6 categories: Sensory, Feeding, Toys / Puzzles, Environment, Social and Training.**

Sensory

Letting our dogs and cats sniff, touch, hear, see and explore different objects and areas around our homes and yards are a great way to provide enrichment.



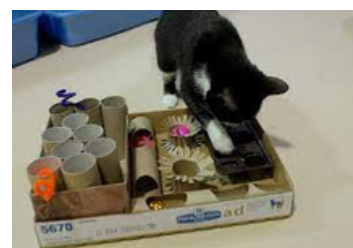
Toys and puzzles

Providing toys of different types (and play styles) for our dogs will let them expend energy, help develop motor skills for young animals and build our human-animal bond.



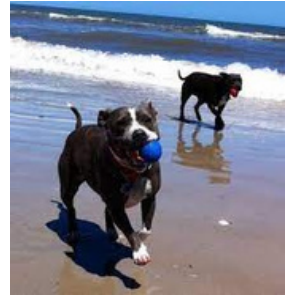
Feeding

In the wild animals spend most of their day sourcing food. Our domestic pets spend only a few minutes eating their food out of a conventional bowl. Slow-feeding bowls can extend the amount of time it takes for them to eat their meal and turn it into a fun way to enjoy their meals.



Environment

Going on adventures or changing our pet's environment provides excellent mental stimulation!



Social

Arranging doggy playdates with our dog's friends can help them fulfil their social needs. Proper socialisation of puppies leads to well-mannered, social adult dogs.



Training

Training is a great way to bond with our pets, build their confidence and teach them how to be fantastic canine members of society. Old dogs can definitely learn new tricks! Positive reinforcement style training is the best and most fun way for dogs (and cats!) to learn!



Toys that provide enrichment:

- Kong toys - There is a variety of different types (normal, genius, wobbler)
- Busy Buddy dog toys - Kibble Nibble, tug-a-jug, twist n' treat
- Aussie Dog toys - Range of EXTREMELY durable toys
- Puzzle Feeders - Green feeder, Buster dog maze, snuffle mats (Nina Ottosan)
- Home Alone toy - Mounted on washing lines or under decks, a fun toy for dogs that like to pull and tug

Homemade enrichment toys:

- Plastic bottles - cut holes out of the bottle and fill it with food
- Ice cream bucket ice-blocks - Freeze dry food, fruits, vegetables, toys, bones
- Toilet rolls - fill with dry food end fold in both ends to keep food inside
- Muffin tray puzzle - get a muffin tray that suits your dog's size. Put food or treats into holes. Cover holes with tennis balls and let your dog work out how to find their food.
- Scatter feeding - Instead of putting food into their dog bowl, scatter biscuits in your yard for some fun foraging time.
- Sand pit - for dogs that love to dig! Provide a sand pit that can be covered when not in use. Also adds potential for burying toys/treats for dogs to sniff out and excavate.

Preventing Resource Guarding behaviour

Resource guarding is when a dog controls access to food, objects, people and locations that are important to him through defensive body language or overt aggressive display. This is a relatively common canine behaviour and is influenced by a number of environmental and situational stimuli, including a dog's natural instinct to survive..

Because people often misunderstand why their dogs guard and why there is social competition, many owners of resource guarders often get angry and confrontational with their dogs. Confrontation, however, increases competition and causes the dog to guard the contested resource even more. Using physical punishment on a resource guarding dog is the exact opposite of what you need to do. Instead, make sure you understand the canine experience and work to instill more confidence in the dog so that he feels less threatened.

When working to rehabilitate a dog that aggressively guards his resources, he should not be 'dominated' into submission, nor should he be challenged or physically punished. It is much safer to attempt a 'bloodless coup' without the dog ever realizing you are doing so.

TIPS

- Begin by changing the physical picture and provide a new bowl and a different location for your dog to eat in.
- Vary feeding times so that your dog never has the chance to become tense when his body clock tells him it is time to eat.
- Utilize the empty bowl method. Pick up your dog's bowl and make it look like you are filling it with his food.
- Place the empty food bowl on the ground in front of him. Wait for him to investigate, see there is nothing there and look at you. As soon as he looks at you, praise him and add a bit of food into his bowl.
- After your dog has finished eating the food wait for him to look at you again and add more food into his bowl.
- Repeat this until all the food has been eaten. Walk away from his bowl and then back and add a little more. This shows your dog that your approach and presence at his food bowl means he is going to get more food and you are a positive part of his feeding experience.
- Feed your dog in this manner for a week and as your dog becomes more relaxed with your presence close to his bowl, gradually add larger handfuls of food until you get to the point where you can put down a full food bowl and he can eat with you standing right next to him.
- The next stage is to practice walking by an empty bowl and throwing a piece of high value food such as chicken into it. Every time you approach your dog's empty bowl your dog will see your approach as something good.

The last stage of this training is to throw a delicious treat into your dog's bowl as he is in the process of eating. By this time he should be much more relaxed with your presence and able to accept you being close to him as he eats.

IMPORTANT!!

Never punish or ignore your dog for growling at you for taking something away from them. It is their way of communicating with you that they value the item they have. After warning us with a growl, a dog's next way of communicating is to snap, and then bite. If you acknowledge the growl and give them some space and then try again with a more valuable reward, you will have a better outcome and your dog will continue to communicate with you.

If you continue to push through their boundaries they may feel the need to escalate to a snap or bite. Once you withdraw from a snap or bite they will learn that that was a very effective way to keep what they have. Repeatedly ignoring a warning signal from your dog but listening to a snap or bite may teach them that growling is not effective at all and to just snap or bite right away instead of growling.

When this happens the behaviour is often described as 'biting without warning' or "out of nowhere".

Please listen to your dog if or when they growl, this will ensure that they will be able to effectively communicate with you when they are uncomfortable.

The canine LADDER of AGGRESSION

Dogs communicate their discomfort with a situation and a desire to end an interaction by using visual cues. These are depicted on this ladder of aggression. Recognizing the lower-rung gestures is important so a perceived stress or threat to a dog can be removed sooner.



Source: Shepherd K. Ladder of aggression. In: Horwitz D, Mills DS. BSAVA Manual of Canine and Feline Behavioural Medicine, 2nd ed. 2009.

Teaching your puppy to go to a mat and settle down

Your puppy should be taught right from the very beginning that it needs to have some quiet moments. This will ensure that they can settle throughout the day at home, and you can extend that behaviour so that they will learn to settle outside the home on their mat.

Teaching them to settle on their mat wherever they are will allow you to feel comfortable taking them on outings to the local cafe, dog-friendly restaurants, parks, dog beaches, and other people's houses, and they will feel comfortable settling despite being in a busy environment.

Getting your puppy to go to the mat

- 1** Stand next to the mat and lure your puppy onto it. Once all 4 paws are on the mat "Yes!" and reward.
- 2** Repeat 2-3 more times.
- 3** Next once they are on the mat, ask for a sit, then "Yes!" and reward. Repeat 3-5 times before moving to the next step.
- 4** Next ask for a sit, then down, then "Yes!" and reward. Repeat 3-5 times before moving to the next step.
- 5** Once they are reliably lying down on the mat, build the length of time they stay on the mat. To do this "Yes!" once they lie down on the mat, but wait 2-3 seconds before giving them the reward. Continue to extend on the amount of time they spend on the mat before receiving the reward.
- 6** Now reduce the distance you need to walk to the mat in order to lure them onto it. First, start with one step away from the mat, then two, increasing as they become better at going to the mat by themselves. Remember to keep the same hand signal pointing towards the mat.
- 7** Take fewer and fewer steps toward the mat so that they learn to go to their mat relying on you pointing towards the mat. Work up to being able to send them to their mat from anywhere in the house. Reward their effort for learning this with a good reward, like a chew.
- 8** The final step is to teach your puppy to be calm and settled on her mat in different locations around the house, then your yard, back yard, front yard, nature strip, quiet park, busy park, cafe, restaurant, dog beach, etc. Remember to use high-value rewards!

TIPS

- Use a leash with excitable puppies when teaching this exercise
- Keep the mat in the same position until the puppy understands the exercise and goes to his mat consistently.
- If they go to the mat of their own accord, give praise and/or a reward immediately.
- Practice staying on their mat when you are having dinner to prevent begging at the table or sending them to their mat when you first arrive home so that they are settled and not underfoot.

Teaching your puppy to walk nicely on a loose lead

This is an essential lesson for your puppy to learn. You will be more likely to take your puppy out for a walk or on trips if they are able to walk well on a lead. Walking provides opportunities for environmental enrichment, mental and physical exercise, and social awareness.

Teaching your puppy to walk calmly on lead will help you both have a good time while walking and prevent unwanted behaviours and injuries from excessive pulling or over-excitement while walking.

Your puppy paying attention to you is the basis of good lead manners, you need to be the most interesting and rewarding thing in the environment.

Getting your puppy to walk on a loose lead

- 1** Have your puppy correctly fitted with a front leading harness and an appropriate matching lead. They should be comfortable before you start the exercise. A veterinary nurse can help you with this.
- 2** Swing a treat past your puppy's nose, then bring the treat up to your shoulder. When your puppy looks at you, "Yes!" and reward.
- 3** Now start marching on the spot and every time your puppy looks at you "Yes!" and reward.
- 4** Then you're going to lure your puppy with a treat to take one step with you, "Yes!" and reward as soon as they step up next to your leg.
- 5** Continue to take a step and lure your puppy to walk with you. Remember 1 step = 1 treat.
- 6** Next take 2 steps then "Yes!" and reward.
- 7** Then 3 steps then "Yes!" and reward. Continue to take an extra step and remember to reward your puppy when they are right next to your leg.
- 8** Start in your house, then progress to your back yard, then the front yard, then down the street, in a quiet park, in a busy park.

Remember! With each new location, you need to start from the beginning. Use the training method for each new environment.

TIPS

- Take steps that are the size of your puppy's steps, a small dog has to do a lot of steps if we step out a meter away.
- Hold the lead with a little bit of slack in it. If you hold the lead tightly your puppy is likely to respond by pulling against the leash.
- If your puppy is surging ahead, re-gain his attention by calling him back and giving him praise and a treat. Then slowly move forward again.
- Moving forward is a reward in itself, so intermittently treat your puppy when they are walking close to you
- If your puppy is reluctant to move forward with the lead-on, use lots of encouragement and a treat to encourage him forward. Give your puppy praise and reward him with the treat as he moves forward.
- Utilise sniff and decompression walks as well. they are a great source of enrichment and a great way to use up energy.