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3 Tips for Dog Enrichment

1. Food Dispensing

Dogs have a natural instinct to forage and to use their nose. Make breakfast and dinner interesting by using a food dispensing toy. It can be as simple as spreading their breakfast on a cookie sheet, or doing a kibble toss across the kitchen floor. They love to “search and find”. You can purchase food dispensing toys like a stuffed [Kong](#) or balls that they can roll around on the floor which dispenses their food. If you are a crafty person you can make a [Snuffle](#) mat which are pieces of fleece tied to a flat plastic or rubber frame. Spread the kibble in the mat and watch your dog go hunting for breakfast!

2. Teach a Trick

Mental exercise is just as important as physical exercise. Actually, sometime even more important as it teaches your dog to problem solve, learn new things and exercise their brain. Tricks are a great way to have fun with your dog and then be able to show off those tricks to family and friends. One of my favorite sites is [Kikopups](#) with 20 tricks you can teach your dog. Also, [Clicker Training.com](#) has trick instructions in their training library.

3. Every Day Routines

We all learn best in our natural environment and within everyday routines. Our dogs are no different. Make a list of the daily routines that you do with your dog. Teach the skills of wait, eye contact, attention and focus and more within your daily routines. Here are a few ideas to spark your memory.

Meal Times : Have your dog wait for his food. Dog sits, bowl goes down. If they break position, bowl goes up. Just wait for that “nano” second that they wait and then put the bowl down for the reward...breakfast. Keep increasing the time that they wait before the bowl goes down.

Door/entry and exit: Waiting....with a calm sit or stand at the door. Door opens...if they move, door closes . Like the waiting for their mealtime, we increase the amount of time before the door opens and they are “free” to move.

Bed or Mat: Learning to go to their mat, bed or crate on cue.

Default Sit: When your dog approaches you, request a sit or wait for an offered sit. Reward this richly. Your dog will begin to offer the sit automatically and look up to you. It is like saying “Please” and now I’m ready for the next direction.

Every moment is a teachable moment with your dog!