



How to Meet Dog Enrichment Needs

Meet Dog Drive Needs and Keep Stress Low

Dogs are born with a drive to perform digging, scavenging, chewing, dissecting, barking, and hunting behaviors. These core behaviors are so incredibly important for dog well-being that they often develop behavior and mental health issues if they cannot perform these activities. Note that some dogs may need to be supervised during some or all enrichment activities to prevent swallowing non-food items. Here are some ideas to help meet your dog's enrichment needs:

Scavenging Drive

- Set up small treat treasure hunts in your home to help your dog express scavenging drive without doing any in-house destruction like digging in the trash.
- Try puzzle toys that mimic scavenging because they throw food all over the floor such as [Kong Wobbler](#) (among many others).
- Manually scattering kibble widely on the floor to encourage scavenging.

Chewing Drive

- Have a variety of both long-term and short-term chew items of various textures, types, and flavors, available at all/most times that your dog is at home. If your dog is experiencing stress, it may use chewing to cope with stress.
- Experiment with what your dog actually enjoys chewing on.
- Do not give rawhide unsupervised as it can be a choking hazard.

Dissecting Drive

- [Kong Classic](#) and food puzzles such as [Omega Tricky Treat Ball](#) (among others) create excellent dissection drive opportunities that do double duty to help make dogs tired from concentrating hard on puzzle-solving. Feeding dogs meals in a Kong or other enrichment toy in lieu of bowl feeding is an easy way to meet enrichment needs. See [Art of Stuffing Puzzle Toys](#).
- Fill [clean cardboard tubes](#) and boxes with kibble or treats, folding in both ends, and letting the dogs rip these apart to get to the treats inside. The tubes are available at craft and office supply stores, but you can also use the tubes found under paper towels, toilet paper, and wrapping paper as long as they do not have glue on them.
- Allowing your dog to tear the stuffing out of toys is actually great for well-being. It reduces stress by giving an outlet for dissection drive. Make sure that your dog does not

consume stuffing and ensure that toys do not have swallowable plastic noses, whiskers, eyes, buttons, etc. before giving them to your dog.

- Toys such as [Outward Hound's Hide-a-Squirrel](#) engage dissection drive. You can stuff treats inside of the tree, stuff the squirrels inside, and allow your dog to pull all of the squirrels out in order to get to the treats.
- [Canine Enrichment Facebook group](#) has lots of great dissection-based enrichment ideas.

Hunting Drive

- Most dogs have at least some elements of their predatory/hunting sequence as they evolved from social hunters. Playing games keys into hunting drive and helps reduce anxiety. It also helps to ensure that small animals won't become the unwitting targets of a dog's hunting drive.
- Games such as tug and fetch engage elements of hunting and dissecting drive.
- Teaching your dog to play dog sports that really engage the dog mind and body fully such as flyball, nose work, agility, treibball, etc. engage hunting drive in various ways. All require training to learn, but there are many resources available to learn dog sports, including local sport clubs, online courses, and in-person classes.
 - Additional hunting drive resources:
 - [Oregon Humane Society Dog Training Classes](#)
 - [Portland Agility Club](#)
 - [Introduction to Treibball](#)
 - [Portland Tail Blazers Flyball Club](#)

Digging

- Build your dog a digging pit in your yard (see [Digging pit tutorial](#)).
- Encourage digging at the beach or dog park.
- Bury toys or treats in a pile of old blankets and towels for your dog to find.
- Let your dog dig in water from a wading pool.
- Make your dog a ball pit by hiding treats on the bottom of a wading pool and filling the pool with balls.

If you have any questions regarding this enrichment guide, please reach out to Mia at Mia@MegaHeartsDogAndCat.com.

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