

Teach your dog to use a KONG – works best if you have a set of 3- 4- to keep filled.

Kongs can be used as a training tool to teach “go to place” and “down/stay”. They are enrichment tools as well>

There are different sizes and colors of Kongs. The puppy-size are softer to chew and smaller, of course. If your pup is older than 6 months, you can probably start with a red small or medium, depending on the size of your dog. The black Kongs are harder rubber for heavy chewers. Be sure to supervise your dog until you know if your dog needs a black one or not. *For a proper fit, your dog wouldn't be able to put their paw or nose inside the hole completely.* The idea is that they will lick and nibble at the contents of this training tool. Until your dog is *at least* 10 months old, spend your money on these [food puzzles](#) rather than soft toys that may get chewed up.

[Great video on this!](#)



The point is to keep your dog busy and her mind occupied doing things she is supposed to do- chew on her own things. Use this specifically as a food puzzle, not an interactive toy to play with her. Pick up empty Kongs when they are done, to be refilled. It helps create an independent dog who will go and lie down in her place and soothe herself by extracting food from the puzzle. It rewards the dog for lying on her mat/bed quietly. If she is working a Kong, she is not barking.

Think of it as a pacifier, or tool to teach self-soothing while confined or crated.

You will use her daily ration of kibble to fill them.

Give Kong 3-4 times a day to create a pattern and habit of the dog working on puzzle in his own place- a crate, bed or area in your house. Kongs are a great tool to teach dogs that when you leave the house or leave them alone, they will get a reward or treat. They learn to accept you leaving the house without them more easily as they look forward to the food reward. Kongs are like eating bones for dogs, only better!

You can get different sizes and toughness depending on your individual dog's needs. **Red** is good for starters.

Eventually you want to feed all regular meals out of KONGS to stimulate the dog mentally. In other words, put your dog in his crate/on his bed to eat his meals a few times a day. This trains him to use a crate and how to entertain himself. (Or give him the Kong in his place in his room or dog bed/mat/rug.) The goal is to work towards setting aside the amount of dry food (kibble) your dog would get in a day and put in Kongs to give through out the day.

ie.) 2 cups of dry food (kibble) goes in 4 Kongs each day (unless you are training other behaviors, then use that dry food in training)

To begin

Note: In multiple dog households, each dog would need a separate area to feel safe to work the Kongs. Maybe one dog likes the outdoors more and you leave that dog outside, one in bathroom, one in separate bedroom, laundry room, etc.

Level 1 - It is important to teach your dog he can “win” this puzzle, so we start off easy to let him be successful. You may need to hold it while they lick the food out to start.

1. At first make it easy to get the food out of KONG: fill with moist canned food that you know your dog LOVES. (chicken, cheese, Zukes)

For example, if you fill it with just dry food, the food will fall out easily for a WIN. Place Kong in the crate, pen or on bed depending on what you want to teach your dog. Make it easy for the first week.

*High value food= smellier the better! **

Some examples of filling are canned food, bits of chicken, moist treats like Stella and Chewy's. //Dog biscuits are not usually that high value. But they make a great plug in the end of the Kong for harder puzzles //

You will have to teach the dog to work the puzzle until done. That is why you start with soft canned food you know he will lick until all is out. If you stuff it with chicken he will be motivated to eat it all! Then you work towards making it more difficult and use regular dry food with a plug in the end or frozen. Read on! When your dog will finish the Kong completely by herself, move to a more difficult level and fill with lower value (regular dry or can food), combined with smaller amounts of great stuff.

Pick the Kong up until another time if the dog walks off and leaves it. You can store in fridge if it has food that will spoil. This teaches the dog that it has to work it all when it first gets it.

Do the easy Kong training for 2-3 times a day. Puppies can have it several times a day.

After about 4-6 days in a row, when the dog is regularly lying down in one place to finish all the food out of the Kong, you can make it a tad bit harder!

If dog gets up from its place or doesn't eat it all in one sitting, remove the Kong and try again later, putting the Kong on the bed, in the crate or on a rug. Maybe the stuffing needs to be higher value!

Level 2- Fill 2-4 Kongs (Depends on size of your dogs) with the regular meal kibble but put something spectacular in the bottom...like a piece of cheese or tiny

piece of rotisserie chicken** and then “cork” the top off with peanut butter or canned dog food (that would be like bone marrow.)

Tell your dog , “go to crate” or “go to bed” or other cue, then lead dog over to bed or crate and put the Kong down for him to eat.

Plug the end with small dog biscuits in the end.



PROTIP: Soak dry kibble in water until soft, then squish into the Kong to act like canned dog food! When you freeze this mush, it gives your dogs pleasure by licking and chewing- instinctive behaviors. [Video example](#)

Level 3- Fill the Kong with canned food or soaked kibble mush (or combination of daily ration of dinner plugged with canned food) and **freeze**. These puzzles will keep dog licking and working the puzzle longer. You can run water to soak the dry food before freezing or use a bone broth liquid to soak it and then freeze.

PROTIP: Put the smelliest, best small bit of food in the Kong first (tbsp of can food, peanut butter, chicken) then the kibble and block the end with something like biscuits.

Once you know your dog will wag her tail when she sees the Kong and goes to his place, you can leave the dog with it when you leave the house.

Tell her go to her bed (if she is loose in the house) or go to the crate and give it to her. Then leave without another word.

The association becomes that you leaving the house or her going into the crate means 20-30 minutes of yummy treats, licking at the Kong as it thaws.
Good things happen in the crate or when you leave.

*I don't like to use peanut butter that much- high fat content and salt. Also some ingredients may be **Xylitol** which is extremely dangerous for dogs.

Try a dab of honey around the rim of the opening that will help clump the kibble.

****Best to use regular rotisserie chicken/skin –not peppered or BBQ flavored! or high quality canned food like Instinct or Natural Balance.**

I also use canned pumpkin, cream cheese or even string cheese for plugging the end.

To create interest, I might hide a smelly treat in with the kibble once in awhile in the Kong. Mix it up and make it interesting for your dog and they will look forward to this training tool! **Dried lamb lung** seems to be a crowd-pleaser. [Smelts](#) are also good and smelly.

Videos Stuff kong https://youtu.be/lgeihMC7cNI	Use Kong to teach Go to bed https://youtu.be/z7qEe_smktl
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Local places that sell high quality dog products:

- King Feed in Wimberley
- Whole Pets Market Dripping Springs
- Tomlinsons in Austin/BelTerra Dripping Springs
- Tractor Supply

Visit this link to see more about [food puzzles](#).

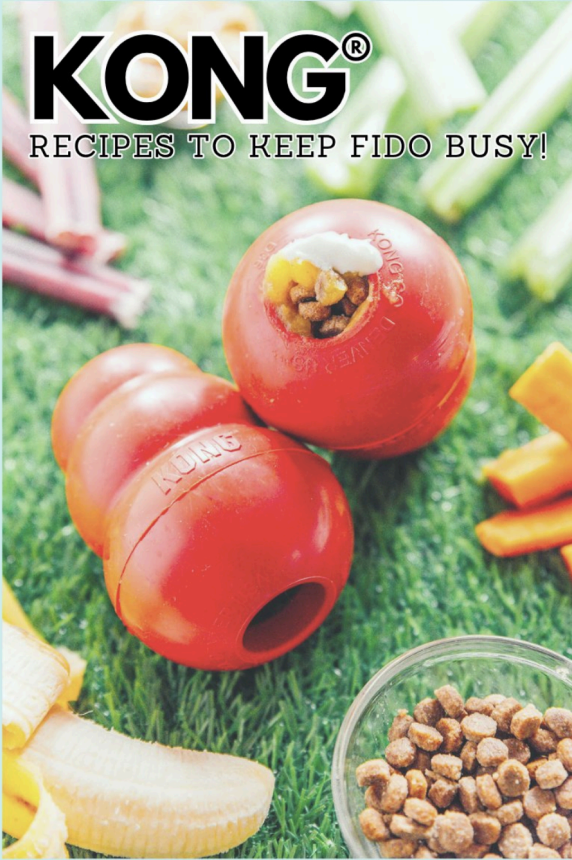


A day in the life of a puppy!
Pictured Below- stuffed and ready for freezer
[West Paw Zogoflex](#) stuffable Puzzle
[Busy Buddy](#) and Kong products

Get CREATIVE!

I am not the only one advocating KONGS! Check out this webpage.
<https://stumpsandrumps.com/how-to-stuff-a-kong-like-a-pro/#:~:text=To%20start%2C%20I%20like%20to,3%20ribs%20of%20the%20Kong.>

Stacy Greer made these great graphics.



KONG®
RECIPES TO KEEP FIDO BUSY!

The image shows three red KONG dog toys on a green grassy surface. One toy is open, revealing a filling of kibble and small pieces of banana. Another toy is partially filled with kibble. A third toy is empty. In the foreground, there are slices of banana and a small glass bowl filled with kibble.

The KONG® allows you to be as innovative as you want just don't feed your dog onions, grapes, raisins, nuts or chocolate! Variety is the key!

It is recommend that you use your dog's KONG® as opposed to a food bowl. This means your dog eats from the KONG® & not a bowl.

Don't use the KONG® as a treat dispenser, use it as a food bowl. Fill it with your dog's meal instead of treats. This is a great way to start your dog's journey to learning how to work for food out of a food puzzle.

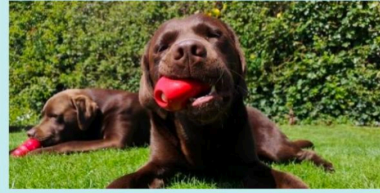
STACY GREER, CPDT-KA



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THE BEEF CASSEROLE LAYER DISH

Ingredients

- dog kibble
- shredded cheese
- cooked, drained ground beef
- cooked peas & carrots



- ① Place a small amount of kibble in the bottom of the KONG®.
- ② Sprinkle shredded cheese as a next layer on top of the kibble.
-  ③ Add a layer of lean, cooked & drained ground beef on top of the cheese layer.
- ④ Sprinkle some cooked peas & carrots over the ground beef layer.
- ⑤ Fill the remainder of the KONG® with your dog's kibble. 
- ⑥ Serve KONG® chilled, frozen or as-is.



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THE VEGGIE STEW MIX

Ingredients

- dog kibble + canned dog food
- cream cheese
- frozen peas
- frozen spinach
- chopped carrots

- ① Place your dog's kibble in a bowl. Use about $\frac{1}{2}$ of the normal measured amount for a meal. Mix canned food with the kibble. 
- ② Mix frozen peas, spinach & chopped carrots together to make enough to be the remaining $\frac{1}{2}$ of your dog's meal.
-  ③ Mix all ingredients together & spoon into the KONG®.
- ④ Fill the top hole of the KONG® with cream cheese, like a cap or seal.
- ⑤ Place KONG® in a cup, filled side up. Place in freezer for at least 4 hours. Serve frozen or partially thawed.



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THE CHICKEN CASSEROLE MIX

Ingredients

- dog kibble
- boiled chicken breast
- chicken broth or stock
- shredded cheese

① Place your dog's kibble in a bowl. Use only $\frac{1}{2}$ of the normal measured amount of your dog's meal.

② Shred or cut up boiled, unseasoned chicken breast. Use enough that it could account for the remaining amount of your dog's meal.

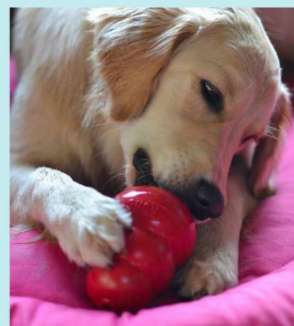
③ Put the kibble & chicken in a bowl & mix them together, add some shredded cheese on top.



④ Place the KONG® in a cup, nose down after plugging the tiny hole with cream cheese or peanut butter.

⑤ Pour chicken broth into the large hole & fill with the broth. Some might spill or leak into the cup. That's ok!

⑥ Place KONG®, in cup, in freezer for at least 4 hours. Serve frozen or partially thawed.



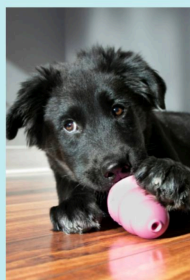
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THE BREAKFAST FRUIT MIX

Ingredients

- dog kibble
- plain yogurt
- egg - raw or scrambled
- bananas
- strawberries
- blueberries



① Place your dog's kibble in a bowl. Use about $\frac{1}{2}$ of the normal measured amount for a meal. Mix a raw or scrambled egg in.



② Put a spoonful of yogurt on the kibble & stir it up.

③ Chop up bananas, apples & blueberries to equal about 2-3 Tbsp for medium or large dogs or 1 Tbsp for small dogs.



④ Mix all ingredients together & spoon into the KONG®. Fill to appropriate amount for your dog's size.

⑤ Place KONG® in a cup, filled side up. Place in freezer for at least 4 hours. Serve frozen or partially thawed.



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