

## **Keeping your dog entertained and stimulated**

We are all being asked to stay home and although this may be difficult and frustrating for us and our dogs, it is temporary and there are many things that we can all do to help make it easier.

Bored dogs are unable to cope with a lack of stimulation and may show signs of behavioural issues, so it's important that you supplement their normal exercise routine with activities in your home and garden to keep them entertained.

If you or a member of your household show signs of coronavirus it's important that you stay inside. You should not take your dog for a walk yourself and if you are unable to exercise them in your home or garden then you can ask someone else to walk them for you, but you should take precautions to avoid the spread of COVID-19.

### Keep a routine.

Try to ensure that both you and your dog have a regular routine. If possible, make sure that they get up and go to bed at roughly the same time each day and that they have regular times for feeding and playing. This will help them know what to expect from their day. Try to encourage your dog to have some regular time and quiet periods when they are left by themselves. This will prepare them for when you go back to work and leave them for short periods.

### Use food

Use a food puzzle to make mealtimes more stimulating for your dog, these include bases to put food on, making it more difficult to get to the food, or toys to hide food into. If you do not have one you could order one online or ask a friend or neighbour to pick one up for you.

Scent work can be a great way to keep dogs busy for ages. Try hiding treats around the garden or house and send them off in search of them.

### Play with your dog

Most dogs love playing, so a good game of indoor fetch or tug of war can keep them entertained. If you are playing with your dog inside the house, try to ensure that they play on non-slip surfaces to avoid injury. Make sure your dog isn't overdoing it and give them regular breaks and access to fresh water at all times.

Use toys and dental chews to keep your dog stimulated and stop them chewing on things. If you have a number of toys why not try a toy rotation and put one away one day and bringing out another. This may stop them getting bored as quickly and will keep their toys new and exciting.

### Think outside the box

Try creating an obstacle course inside your house or in your garden using toys, cushions, blankets, towels, or anything you can think of. Get them to jump over a crunched-up blanket, or weave through towers of cushions. Use your imagination and take the time to teach your dog how to run the course.

Dogs love to chase bubbles, so if you have any in the house get them out and see what your dog thinks of them.

Teach them a new trick

Learning a new trick or command is great mental stimulation for a dog. Get out the treats and try to teach "roll over", "sit" or "paw". YouTube is full of advice and videos on how to train your dog.

Let them go outside

If you have a garden, then play outside to give them more things to investigate and smell to help keep them stimulated.

Give them things to watch and listen to

Keep the curtains or blinds open so that your dog can see what's going on in the outside world. Put a cushion or a chair by the window to let them see outside.

Look for dog friendly podcasts for them to listen to, or TV for dogs on YouTube to provide them with other types of interest and stimulation.

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