

A Guide to Working Your Dog's Brain!

Step #1 : Retire the food bowl

Slow Feeder
Puzzle Toys

Step #2 : Games

Find It/Nose Work
Agility

Step #3 : Training

Obedience
Walks
Tricks

Step #4 : Make a schedule

Your dog has an instinctual desire to hunt for his food -help him! Give him creative ways to work for his meals. This gives him a job and helps burn off that extra mental energy. Measure out how much food your dog needs to eat per day and divide it up using the methods suggested below.

Retire the food bowl!

Food bowls are BORING! There are plenty of other ways to feed your dog including but not limited to: slow feeders, puzzle toys, Kongs, frozen treats, etc.

Type	Use	Links for ideas!
Slow Feeders	Bowls designed to slow down fast eaters to avoid health issues such as bloat and impaction	www.slo-bowls.com
Puzzle Toys	Creative toys used to engage a dog's brain while eating, encourages problem solving and satisfies the desire to hunt for food	http://outwardhound.com/shop/dog-games/treat-games Click on DIY puzzle toy link on Pawsitively Trained site
Kongs	Durable rubber toys used as an excellent "pacifier" for the dog to keep them busy for a period of time	www.kongcompany.com/recipes/



Loaded Ice Cubes	Use ice cube trays to make edible food based toys for dogs to encourage them to work for their food	
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Games!

Have some fun with your dog! Games are a great way to engage with your dog, build your bond, and teach your pup essential problem solving skills.

Find It/Nose Work

- Teach your pup how to search for their food with their nose (not their eyes!). This activity comes more naturally to certain breeds but all dogs will benefit from some time spent following their sniffer.
- Hide treats around the house, in the yard, on your walks, or wherever else you can to enhance their searching abilities.
- Always use high value, super smelly, treats as the “hides” to really motivate your dog
- Simple Find It exercises are easy to do with your pooch but to have a working Nose Work dog, you will need to put in some time with a professional trainer. What are your goals?
 - Competition Nose Work
 - Search and Rescue
 - Bomb/Drug/Endangered Animal/etc. Scent Work
 - Fun way to bond with your dog
- No matter your long-term goals, this is a very fun skill for both you and your dog.

Agility

- Find various obstacles around the house, in your yard, etc., and teach your dog how to interact with them in specific ways. This activity comes more naturally to certain breeds but all dogs are able to dog some level of agility work.
- Teach your dog to -walk along a retaining wall or bench, jump over a log, climb up a ramp, or whatever other creative activities you can come up with.
- Always use high value, super smelly, treats as the “hides” to really motivate your dog
- Interested in competitive agility? You can buy or build your own equipment and/or take an agility training class.
- No matter your long-term goals, this is a very fun skill for both you and your dog.



Training!

The best way to utilize your dog's mental energy is by teaching them something new! This is also an excellent way to have your dog work for their meals. Prepare a "trail mix" of kibble and a few different types of high value treats in a treat pouch and work with your dog until your pouch is empty!

Obedience

- Teach your dog new cues that will be helpful in your everyday life
 - Sit / Down / Stay / Leave It / Wait / Come / etc.
- Once your dog can perform the behaviors in a distraction free area, go find new places to train!
 - In the house / Backyard / Front yard / Around the neighborhood / At the park / In a store / etc.
- Keep obedience fun! This should be engaging for both you and your dog; obedience is not boot camp.

Walks

- Make your walks more fun and thought provoking for your dog. Walks shouldn't just be used as a potty break OR a short sniff session OR a way to physically drain your dog.
- They should be used for all of the above PLUS a chance to bond with your dog PLUS an engaging training session PLUS an opportunity to play games PLUS time to work on obedience.
- Bring your treat pouch, keep your walks interesting, change your route, go to new places, and HAVE FUN!

Tricks

- Teach your dog something new!
- Tricks can be fun, flash, and/or functional -the options are endless.
 - Touch a target / fetch the leash / Play dead / Rollover / Shake / Turn off the light / Jump through a hoop / Catch a ball
- Take your show on the road and show off for friends and family to improve your cue consistency and responsiveness.

Make a Schedule!

All of the ideas listed above will help your dog drain that mental energy and give him jobs to think about; however, the more consistent you are, the more benefit you will see. Try to schedule at least one mental exercise per category per day.

Check out the next page for schedule ideas. Be creative! The more variety you add to your dog's "work week" the happier they will be. Make sure to always set the dog up for success. If toys/games/training is too difficult for your dog, they may become frustrated. Always make interactions with your dog fun and positive to encourage learning and respect.



Example #1 Higher Energy Dog

- Morning
 - Feed dog from Puzzle Toy
- During workday
 - Leave dog with Loaded Kong in crate
- Home from work
 - Nose Work exercises around the backyard
- Evening
 - Training walk around the neighborhood
- Night
 - Put dog to bed with Loaded Kong

Example #2 Higher Energy Dog

- Morning
 - Agility exercises in the backyard
- During workday
 - Leave dog with Loaded Ice Cubes in yard
- Home from work
 - Obedience Training at the pet store
- Evening
 - Puzzle Toy for Dinner

Example #3 Low Energy (Senior) Dog

- Morning
 - Feed dog from Puzzle Toy
- During workday
 - Dog plays Find It with treats previously hidden around yard
- Evening
 - Tricks Training

