



Courtesy of: Heather Hime
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Dog Training & Behavior Services

Physical Exercise & Mental Exercise

Many people have heard the phrase “A tired dog, is a good dog.” This is very true. A dog that has expended energy will be less likely to have excess energy to spend on getting into trouble. There is however also a need for mental stimulation.

Imagine living the rest of your life sitting in your home 8-9 hours per day (or much longer), without a T.V. to watch or a book to read, with literally nothing to do. You might get out of the house/yard 1-3 times per week for about an hour, but that’s it. This is exactly what we expect of our dogs, and we also ask that they be calm when we come home and just relax while you make dinner, do household work etc. We expect that they not bark at things out the window while we are gone, not destroy our belongings, just sleep, all day, unless of course we want to play or take them for a walk. It’s no wonder that dogs develop behavioral issues!

As a human, I would find it very difficult to spend just one day without a T.V., book, computer, etc. It would be awfully lonely and boring and I would likely try to find something I could do. For dog’s, that something is often, chewing a shoe, barking out the window at people, or other sometimes funny but often destructive behavior.

Note: Please avoid playing with your dog with a laser pointer as it can easily cause obsessive light chasing.

Physical Exercise:

You can go for a 5 mile run or put your dog on the treadmill for 30 minutes and the result will be a physically tired dog. But that dog will still have plenty of remaining mental energy because those forms of exercise did not require him to think. Even a shorter walk where the dog is allowed to sniff expends more mental energy than any run will do.

What does this mean? That your dog still has plenty to think about when it comes to getting in trouble. If you’ve ever studied hard for an exam, you’ll know that after a while, your brain feels fried and you are just exhausted. What we are looking for is a healthy mix of physical and mental exercise for our dogs.

What is Mental Stimulation for a dog?

There are many ways to get your dog using it’s brain. Here are some examples:

- Basic Obedience Training– even if it’s just for brushing up.
- Dog Agility
- Flyball
- Canine Disc/Frisbee
- K9 Nosework
- Trick Training
- Rally Obedience

There are also many different types of interactive toys, puzzles and games that you can play with your dog. The other side of this article will tell you more about that.

Dog Play:

Dog play is another great form of both physical and mental exercise. The dog’s learn different play skills and interact with one another. It’s like us humans spending time with friends. On that note, just as with humans, not every dog is interested in interacting with other canines, so just because you want your dog to play more, doesn’t necessarily mean that doggy daycare would be a good fit.

Here is an example of an exercise regimen that includes a mix of physical and mental exercise for a dog with a moderate energy level (keep in mind that this is not a one size fits all model - you will need to adjust according to your dogs health & needs):

- Feed your dog it’s meal several times a week through the use of a puzzle toy.
- Play scent & retrieving games
- Agility Class 1x per week
- Disc/Frisbee practice 5x a week for 10-15 minutes.
- Short Daily Walks
- Playtime with another dog 3-4x weekly.
- Play with a Tail Teaser 2x a week.



www.LuckyPawsMN.com



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Interactive Toys & Puzzles

There is no better way to keep your pooch out of trouble than to keep them busy. The nice thing about interactive toys is that your pooch can play by themselves while you get things done around the house.

Interactive Toys:

There are many types of treat dispensing toys on the market. Some are better for heavy chewers than others. If you teach your dog how to use the toy correctly, they will likely not even try chewing on it. With toys like those listed here, you can simply put a treat under the toy which will encourage your dog to nose or paw at the toy in order to get a treat rather than trying to chew it. Below are three of my favorite treat dispensing toys.

Indoor Games

Dog's are meant to use their noses, however as a family pet, many never really learn to use it. By playing searching games your dog can fine tune their skills.

Scent Games:

My favorite game to teach I call "Find It." Generally the easiest thing to teach your dog to search for is dog food or treats, however you can also teach your dog to find other things such as their ball, tug, or even your keys!

To get started, simply toss a few small treats out in front of your dog on the floor and say "Find It." Continue doing this while slowly making it more challenging by putting the treats under things or around a corner until

KONG Wobbler – This toy is very sturdy and would be great for even heavy chewers.

I.Q. Treat Ball – This would be for moderate chewers or dogs that learn how to use the toy properly.

Tricky Treat Ball – This toy is not great for heavy chewers, but if you teach your dog to use it correctly you should not have any problems.

Puzzles:

Dog Puzzle Toys are a great way to encourage your dog to use it's brain to figure out a potential challenge. It can take some time for dogs to learn the more challenging puzzles, and these toys can be a bit spendy, but your dog will love you for it!

eventually you can put your dog in their crate or another room while you hide things, then go get them and tell them to "Find It."

When teaching them to find different types of objects, simply name the object or say "Where is your ball?" then say "Find It." You may need to help them by repeating, "Where is your ball," then giving them the ball so they know which toy is which. Eventually you will only need to say "Where is your ball?" and your dog will begin to search for it.

You may also teach your dog to find food or other scented objects inside of boxes or under plastic cups. Once your dog seems to know which box or cup the object is in, you can either reward with a treat yourself

These toys come in different difficulty levels. Check out www.nina-ottoson.com which rates each of their puzzle toys by difficulty. You may also find them on Amazon.com by searching "Dog Puzzle Toys."

You should supervise your dog while they are learning how to use puzzle toys to be sure they don't destroy them.



or give them what they found, it will depend on what they are searching for.

Locally interactive toys can be found:
IQ Treat Ball: Chuck & Dons
Tricky Treat Ball: Petsmart
Kong Wobbler: Chuck & Dons, Petsmart & Petco

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