

Environmental Enrichment for Puppies and Kittens

Interactive toys are manufactured in a diverse range of shapes, sizes and various materials. Providing a variety of challenges that can cater to a number of play style needs.

Interactive Chew Toys

Chew toys are an excellent way of keeping a dog happy and busy for hours because you can fill them with different foods like peanut butter or chicken and put them in the freezer for a few hours before giving them to your dog. This makes the stuffing last longer and gives your dog a good feeling while he is chewing.

Treat Balls

Treat balls are a great way of feeding a dog's meal, this will take longer to eat and requires physical interaction and problem solving.

Puzzles

There are many different kinds of puzzle feeders that present challenges and provide dogs with varying degrees of difficulty.

Tug Toys

Tug toys are great for playing the game of tug and retrieve. These toys usually take the form of knotted ropes or are made of durable material that provide a good surface to bite on.

Chase Toys

Most dogs enjoy a chase, so chase style toys can be highly stimulating. By attaching a length of rope to a soft toy, you can run around dragging the toy across the ground and teach your dog to chase after it. This is best done if you can teach your dog to wait and only allow him to chase on your cue, a great way of teaching impulse control.

Below is a quote from Dr Karen London and Dr Patricia McConnell's book titled 'Play together, Stay together', which explores happy and healthy play between people and pets. Play provides enrichment that helps dogs and cats maintain mental, physical, and emotional health and channels energy constructively.



Key Benefits of Play

- Provides physical exercise
- Strengthens the dog and owner bond
- Provides mental stimulation
- It's a fun way to train and great as a reward
- Relieves boredom

Interactive toys should be central part of your canine enrichment plan. Not only are they fun for both dog and owner, they provide much-needed mental and physical stimulation, even when you have to leave home.

“Play is powerful stuff. It influences so many things including development, motivation, emotions, physiology, communication, and behavior. Wow!”



Cats love to play too

Feline play explores all parts of the predatory sequence: search, stalk, chase, pounce, catch and manipulate. Whilst play in adult cats may alter somewhat from when they were kittens, it is a common misconception that cats **only** play as kittens. Adult cats benefit from regular play and playful interaction with owners. Establishing what stimulates a cat can require some trial and error as each cat may develop specific likes and dislikes regarding toys based on the following:

- Texture
- Shape
- Size
- Scent
- Noise/sounds
- Movement e.g., random, quick stop/start motion
- Owner interaction required



Cats are naturally neophilic (excited by novelty) so toys left out will soon lose their appeal, therefore toys should be rotated randomly and stored away while not in use. Cats enjoy play that mimics natural predatory behaviour with short bursts of activity, games that stimulate the drive to chase, pounce and catch are popular. The best time to play with a cat is when it appears they are naturally interested, some clues in your cats behaviour that indicate a good time to initiate play are:

- When your cat spontaneously begins to play or bat at objects
- Sudden staccato movements and increased activity
- Dilated pupils, alert expression
- Vocalisation

Whilst cats don't demonstrate the same level of destruction with their toys that dogs do, it is still wise to implement safety measures when providing kitty with toys.

- Introduce new toys under supervision – To ensure that they are suitable for the individual
- Don't leave teaser toys with a cat unsupervised – Strings can present a digestive hazard and requires supervision to avoid entanglement
- Inspect toys regularly and discontinue use if worn, lose or torn

Overall play has been shown to have a very positive affect on mental and physical development in young animals that carries on through to adulthood.



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