

Boredom busters for dogs

Dogs can become restless when left without mental or physical stimulation. Boredom can lead to behaviours such as excessive barking and destroying things. This fact sheet provides details on a wide range of boredom busters for dogs to help keep their tails wagging.

Why do dogs get bored?

Over many centuries dogs have been domesticated and selectively bred to fulfil specific roles alongside humans. While modern-day dogs simply serve us as family pets, their innate instincts and drive to work are ingrained. Despite not having a specific job in modern households, many dogs still possess a strong desire to engage in activities that tap into these instincts.

Boredom in dogs often arises from a lack of mental challenges, little exercise, or a dull environment. Dogs are animals that crave new experiences, so when their routines become predictable and mundane, they can quickly become bored. Dogs are also social animals that thrive on companionship. If they spend long periods alone without enough social interaction or play, they will become bored.

Signs of boredom in dogs:

- restlessness
- digging, chewing or other destructive behaviours
- barking and whining
- following you around at home
- depression.



How to prevent boredom in dogs

Dogs need plenty of physical activity to keep them happy and healthy. As well as the exercise, the act of venturing out with you or one of your family and experiencing different smells helps their mental stimulation. It's important to include regular exercise in your dog's routine, with different dog breeds having different exercise requirements.

Working breeds such as border collies or kelpies require as much as 2 hours of high intensity exercise every day. Other breeds only need shorter walks, while older dogs may just need gentle exercise to look after their ageing joints.

While out on a walk, let your dog sniff around. This will help enrich your dog's experience

and further reduce boredom. A short 'sniff-fari' can often be as exhausting for a dog as a long distance walk due to the mental stimulation encountered.

Meeting and playing with other dogs will provide your pooch with a whole array of stimulating sights, smells, experiences and exercise. However, ensure your dog is friendly towards other dogs. Socialising helps improve your dog's overall emotional well-being and can help reduce anxiety. Dog parks are perfect for this, or you might consider doggy day care.

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Toys

There are many types of dog toys that can be useful boredom busters. Puzzle toys are interactive food-dispensing toys designed to provide a mental challenge for dogs while also rewarding them for their problem-solving abilities. These toys are particularly useful for dogs with high energy levels and breeds known for their intelligence. Try adding your dog's regular dry food to a puzzle toy instead of feeding them from a bowl. Wet food can be spread on lick mats for a rewarding mealtime treat.

For dogs that love to chew, interactive rubber toys stuffed with dog pastes or dog-friendly peanut butter will keep them entertained while fulfilling their natural urge to chew. Try freezing these treats for an extra challenge.

Interactive toys offer another type of mental stimulation, allowing dogs to exercise their problem-solving skills and engage their minds. For dogs that love to play ball, you could invest in an automatic ball thrower that will continue to shoot balls and keep them entertained for as long as they return them. There are also interactive balls that move and shake unpredictably to engage your dog to play, which is perfect for dogs that spend time indoors during the day.

Long lasting treats

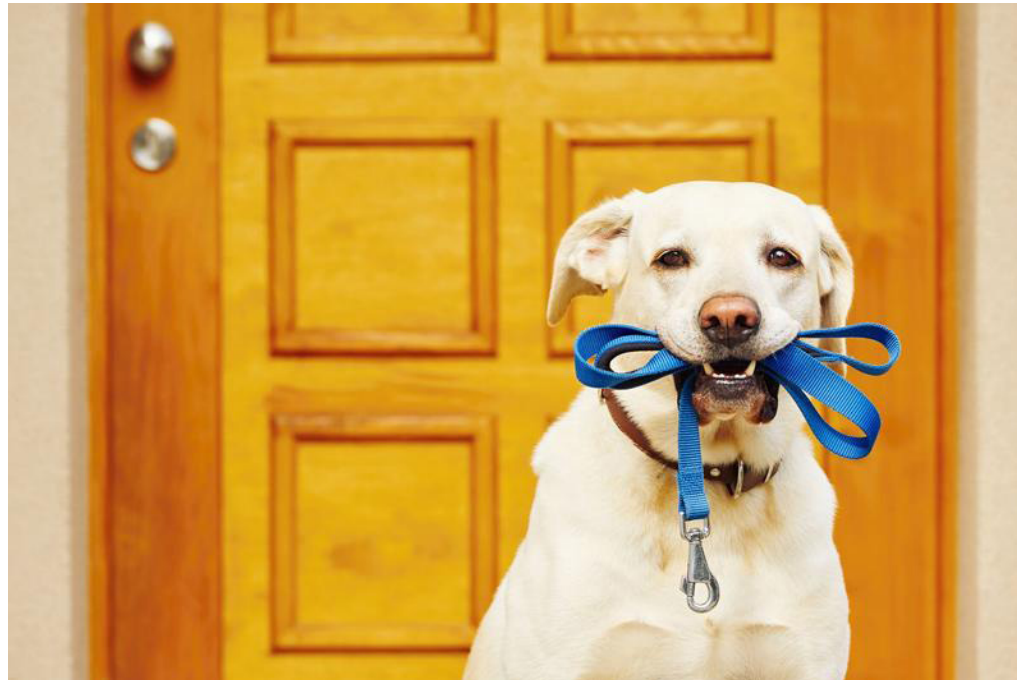
Dogs have a natural urge to chew, which is a normal and instinctive behaviour. Chewing serves a variety of purposes including dental health, stress

relief, exercising the jaw and chewing muscles, entertainment, and mental stimulation.

Long lasting chewy treats are a great way to keep your dog occupied and distracted. Dental treats are also long lasting while helping keep your dog's teeth clean. Important: While fresh raw bones can help keep dogs entertained, it is important to be aware of their risks before giving them to your dog.

Instead of feeding from a bowl, try hiding some of your dog's food or treats in different places around the house or backyard. Sniffing out their next meal will keep them busy and occupied while you are away.

This fact sheet is adapted from an article on petcircle.com.au.



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