



# Chew Toy Training & Boredom Busters

One of the priorities of raising a puppy is to chew toy train your puppy. This means to chew appropriate chew toys/items you give him/her and NOT things they pick up around the house or yard. By teaching your puppy to chew on chew toys you could well save yourself some serious money later

on in furniture or vet bills if they chew something they shouldn't.

The bee's knee's of chew toys are the KONG range of products. They're extremely durable and can be stuffed with food. Chew toys help prevent boredom and anxiety related problems in dogs. For more information on chew toy training for your puppy checkout Dr Ian Dunbar's books "BEFORE & AFTER you get your puppy". Available for free download on [www.dogstardaily.com](http://www.dogstardaily.com)

## Boredom Busters

Boredom and its associated behaviour problems is one of the most common reasons for dogs between the ages of 6 -18 months to be surrendered to animal shelters and pounds. Making boredom one of the biggest killers of young dogs, much more than parvo for example! Boredom can be displayed in many ways, such as digging, barking, chewing and escaping. Yet it is important to remember that it is normal behaviour for dogs to dig, bark and chew. Especially when they are teething or going through the adolescent stage and for some dogs.... beyond adolescence!



Keeping your dog occupied and amused need not be expensive or time consuming. With some basic knowledge of canine behaviour you will find tasks that will utilise your dog's natural instincts and prove tough, fun and interesting for your dog to do.

The toys and tasks in this handout provide your dog with mental stimulation (brain exercise) which is just as important as physical exercise like walking and running. The goal is to make your dog's brain **and** body tired.

Firstly, let's dispel the myth that dogs can't get bored in big backyards.

A big backyard is just as boring as a small

backyard. For example; if you were locked in an empty four bedroom house with no radio, television or books to read, you would be just as bored if you were locked in an empty one bedroom unit with no radio, television or books. It is the quality and variety of the stimulation provided in the backyard that is important, NOT the size of the yard.

## Here are some ideas on keeping your dog occupied when you are out and at home.

Dogs are natural hunters, therefore, it is easy and FUN for the dog to utilise this instinct by asking them to hunt/play/work for their food. A dog working/playing for his food is not cruel. Denying our dogs natural instincts and needs to forage and hunt and play is cruel! Dogs who eat out of a bowl miss out on a variety of challenging and fun games they can play throughout their day!

Before you leave for work throw your dog's dry food all over the backyard - as far as you can. This will keep your dog busy hunting for his food. He probably won't even notice you have gone!

## KONGS - the BEST dog toys on the market!

Every dog should have a **KONG** or two to call his own. **KONGS** are widely used for the prevention of boredom and other behavioural problems.

**KONGS** are uniquely shaped, durable rubber dog toys with a hollow centre which can be filled with food or treats. **KONGS ARE FUN, TOUGH and BEST WHEN STUFFED!**

You can stuff a **KONG** with almost any food item then close off the hole with peanut butter or cheese and let your dog go for it!

The key to teaching your dog to work for food in his KONG is to help the dog be successful early on in his play with a KONG. Make it easy to get food from the KONG, then as your dog gets better at the "game" start making it harder and harder by packing the food more and more tightly into the KONG. The level of difficulty should reflect the dogs level of experience and skills.

We regularly soak out dogs dry food in hot water, wait for it to cool and then stuff it into a KONG and freeze it. This can be hours of work for a dog to eat his dinner rather than less than a minute!!! Of course, a dog needs to work up to this challenge a dog new to KONGS or chew toys will give up, so gradually increase the "difficulty" of your dogs KONGS as he learn how to play the game.



A new KONG toy on the market is the KONG Wobbler. A hard durable plastic KONG which you place your dog normal treats or kibble (dry food) in and let them knock it over to dispense their food. The KONG Wobbler replaces your dogs food bowl and gives your dog an appropriate activity to do while you are out.

**Wobbler tip:** to help get you dog interested in trying harder with the Wobbler add some diced cooked chick or meat (No bones) with the treats and/or kibble. This will add special interest and your dog will persist because of the extra special smells!





If your dog is experienced at the Wobbler and it presents a fun but quick challenge. Place the food inside and add a crumpled up piece of paper. The paper will act like a maze and slow down the rate the food comes out of the Wobbler. Vary the size of the paper until you get a great, but achievable challenge for your dog. This is only for experienced Wobbler users.

## The ultimate KONGsicle!!!!!!!

If you want a long lasting cool game for your dog to play why pack a couple of KONGS with yummy treats or your dog's daily diet. Then place them in a ice cream container filled with water and freeze it!!!! Give it to your dog (outside) and they have an instant KONGsicle to keep them entertained for hours!



Be creative! The more creative you are the more challenging for your dog. Check out [www.kongcompany.com](http://www.kongcompany.com) for more great KONG ideas.

**Large RAW meaty marrow bones** are very inexpensive and can keep some dogs occupied for hours. Once or twice per week replace your dog's breakfast with a raw meaty bone.

Given as a meal your dog is more likely to chew it rather than bury it for later. Bones are great for keeping your dog's teeth clean as well.

## Toys, Toys, Toys

Provide your dog with a variety of **squeaky/chew toys**.



*(please note that if you have a large dog small toys can get trapped in the throat so be aware of this when choosing your dog's special chew toy.)*

**Knot ropes** are strong, durable and inexpensive. They can be soaked in a pot of warm chicken broth, allowed to dry and given to your dog to chew. Remember you must renew the flavour every few days.

Toys should be rotated to keep their "value" always remember to collect any toys you have given your dog when you come home. Offer your dog different toys each day so he/she never grows bored. By collecting and rotating your dog's toys you are going to keep his interest in them. Like children, dogs become bored with the same toys to play with 24 hours a day. They NEED variety.

## Play Dates

Regular play sessions with other friendly dogs are a great way to spend the day. Maybe you could leave your dog at a friend's/relative's/neighbour's house while you are at work. Of course, only do this if you are sure the dogs get along and have spent plenty of supervised time together.

This does not mean you should get a 2<sup>nd</sup> dog to beat your dog's boredom problem. As you could well end up with TWO bored dogs! Only get a 2<sup>nd</sup> dog if you WANT a 2<sup>nd</sup> dog and can afford and devote time to a 2<sup>nd</sup> dog! **Don't get a pet for your pet!**

## Make your yard an adventure playground

To keep dogs entertained they can be provided with a range of activities such as;

- a thick knotted rope to hang from a tree
- an old car tyre hanging so that the middle is at about the dog's head height
- a small children's pool with water for your dog to dig in
- a sandpit with hidden treats for your dog to dig up. Guess where he is going to dig next time he has the urge?



**Tip for digging pits:** place the pit somewhere cool and out of direct sun as dogs often dig to get cool and they won't do that in full sun. Bury biscuits and bones in the dog pit and take your dog over to it making a BIG fuss and "help" him by digging up some treats. Once your dog understands "good stuff" comes out of the pit, then where do you think he might prefer to dig next time?

## Other cool toys

Aussie Dog Toys is a fantastic Australian company who make an extremely tough range of environmental enrichment toys for dogs, horses and zoo animals. You may think they are expensive for "dog toys" however they are very tough and well made and will last for years. Visit them at [www.aussiedog.com.au](http://www.aussiedog.com.au)

**All of these boredom buster ideas are mental exercise for your dog. They cannot be expected to replace your dog's need for physical exercise.**

To keep a dog truly happy he needs a combination of the following;

### Training

Training is more than teaching a dog to sit, drop or come when called.

It is about opening the lines of communication between you and your dog. Training your dog in just the basics will teach him/her essential manners which make living with your canine companion much more pleasurable and rewarding.

### **Daily walks and free-running exercise**

Most dogs are happy with at least one 30 minute walk per day. The extremely active working and herding breeds would be happier with two 30 minute walks per day to keep them truly mentally and physically fit.

Walks give your dog variety in his/her day which is essential in preventing boredom. If your dog will reliably come back to you when called, a great way to let off steam is to let him/her run free in a park or open area (other than your backyard.)

**Obviously common sense should prevail. It would be unwise to do this in a place that your dog may endanger itself or others.**

**You!** Dogs who live constantly in the backyard are more likely to show problem behaviours.

Dogs are social animals. They live in a family structure and must be included in their families activities. When we bring a dog into our lives we are asking him/her to live in **our** family and isolating him/her to the backyard for pretty much 24/7 contributes to boredom and anxiety related behaviours in dogs. This is still the case if even if you have 2 or more dogs.

It is extremely important dogs are allowed to come into the house enabling them to interact with their "family" (us). This in itself reduces the likelihood of problem behaviours developing.

If your dog misbehaves when inside, show them the appropriate behaviour, i.e. train them. Some simple



training in general manners will help show what is expected of them. Also look at introducing some cheap and easy management strategies, management is a way of simply preventing unwanted behaviours in our dogs by controlling their access to certain things/areas.

A dog does not need to have access to the whole house. A baby gate will prevent your dog following you from room to room and jumping all over the kids, yet still include him/her in the activities of the house. A puppy pen prevents chewing and jumping on the couch. Or a dog crate, can be your dogs indoor bed room. Basically TRAIN, DON'T COMPLAIN!

