MaKs Dog Training

Connection - Not Correction

Mental Enrichment for Dogs

A tired brain settles a dog as much as a tired body

The short version: Walks and play tire the body, but every dog also needs work for their brain, every day. A dog with nothing to think about will find their own entertainment - barking, chewing, digging, and pestering for attention. Short sniffing, searching, solving, and learning sessions, spread through the day, help a dog settle, sleep well, and learn faster.

Why brain work matters

- **Uses their natural instincts:** sniffing, searching, licking, chewing, and figuring things out - enrichment gives those natural needs a good outlet.
- **Burns energy calmly:** ten minutes of focused sniffing or puzzle work can settle a dog as much as a much longer walk, without winding them up.
- **Builds confidence:** solving a problem, a little at a time, helps shy and young dogs feel capable and brave.
- **Supports training:** a dog whose brain is busy listens better and settles more easily.
- **Helps at every age and size:** puppies, adults, and seniors all need it - you just scale the challenge to your dog.

Signs your dog needs more

- **Restless and unable to settle** - pacing, following you from room to room, and pestering for attention.
- **Destructive habits** - chewing furniture, digging, and shredding, especially when left alone.
- **Barking and overexcitement** - barking at every sound and getting wound up over small things.
- **Stealing for a chase** - grabbing socks, shoes, and remotes, then running off hoping you will follow.
- **Flat and withdrawn** - sleeping out of boredom rather than tiredness, and losing interest in play.

Easy ways to work their brain

Sniff, search, and solve

- **Sniff walks:** on some walks, slow down and let your dog lead with their nose - for a dog, sniffing is real work.
- **Scatter feeding:** scatter part of a meal in the grass or on a rug and let your dog hunt for every piece.
- **Puzzle feeders and snuffle mats:** start easy so your dog wins, then make it a little harder.
- **Hide and seek:** hide treats, a favourite toy, or yourself in easy spots first, and praise every find.
- **Lick mats and stuffed toys:** freeze a little of their food in them to make it last longer.

Learn, play, and chew

- **Short training:** five minutes of name and come, sit, down, stay, and leave it is brain work.
- **New tricks and games:** teach something new, or revisit an old favourite - learning keeps every brain busy.
- **Safe chews:** an appropriate chew gives chewing a proper outlet - always supervise.
- **Rotate toys:** keep a few toys out and swap them every few days - a toy that has been away feels new again.
- **New places, calmly:** a different quiet street, or a park bench to watch the world from, is mental exercise, too.

Make it part of every day

- **Feed meals during training and enrichment:** use part of their regular food for training, puzzles, and scatter games - brain work built into the day, without extra treats on top.
- **Little and often:** a few short sessions spread through the day beat one long one - end while your dog still enjoys it.
- **Start easy, then build:** let your dog succeed first and add difficulty in small steps - and keep plenty of rest, too.
- **Always supervise:** stay with your dog for puzzles, stuffed toys, and chews, and put anything broken away.

General information only - please talk to your vet first: This handout is general information only. It is not veterinary or behaviour advice and is not a note from a vet. Choose toys, puzzles, and chews that fit your dog's size and chewing strength - especially for a puppy, a senior dog, or a dog with teeth, jaw, or health problems. If fear, barking, or destructive behaviour is not easing, get help from a professional trainer early.

MaKs Dog Training - Private, Individualized In-Home Dog Training
Mandy Kraus (Dog Training Professional) | Novi, Michigan
(248) 692-3974 | maksk9training@gmail.com | maksk9training.com