



Guide Dogs for the Blind

Boredom Busters for Breeders

At-home enrichment ideas from the Breeding Department to keep the breeder you care for in top shape, mentally and physically.

1. Teach a new trick

Our dogs love to learn and work for kibble, so teach them a trick they may not already know like shake, roll over, high-five, or sit pretty. Here is a link to a great training video for how to teach a dog sit pretty, which has the added benefit of developing strong core muscles which will help a dog in their breeding career and support their overall health and injury prevention: <https://youtu.be/IQUerO0woqw> (Hint: Kikopup's YouTube page has lots of other great trick training videos if you want to try more!)

2. Turn mealtime into a game

Slow down your voracious eater with a new meal toy. Food toys like Buster Cubes and Kong Wobblers make dogs work for their meal in a fun way while providing physical and mental stimulation. They'll love rolling it around to release the food. (Hint: don't water down the kibble before adding it to the toy). *Reminder: food should be taken from the dog's daily amount, not in addition to regular meals.* Link to shop Kong Wobblers: <https://www.kongcompany.com/dog/play-type/interactive/wobbler> Link to shop Buster Cubes: https://www.amazon.com/Kruuse-Buster-Mini-Feeder-Cherry/dp/B004YK5UG6/ref=sxbs_sxwds-stvp?cv_ct_cx=buster%2Bcube&keywords=buster%2Bcube&pd_rd_i=B004YK5UG6&pd_rd_r=fd71d46c-0d61-437f-81e6-632438cf6b44&pd_rd_w=S2Vzk&pd_rd_wg=cJRZp&pf_rd_p=967d8720-

3. Work on recall

What's one of the most important safety commands you can work on with a dog? An off-leash recall of course! Got a fenced backyard? Take advantage of it by practicing sit stays and the come command. Remember to bring kibble from the dog's daily amount as a food reward.

4. Make frozen treats

Freeze a dog's meal in their Kong to keep them busy and to exercise their brain. Put their meal in a bowl with just enough water to cover the kibble and let it sit until the water is absorbed. Then stuff their Kong with it and seal the opening with a spoonful of peanut butter (make sure the ingredients label does not contain the toxic sweetener xylitol). Place it in the freezer and in a few hours you will have a tasty "pup-sicle!" It will take the dog a while to get all of that delicious frozen goodness out. (Hint: if you have a thunderstorm-shy dog, this is also a great treat to have on hand for those occasions). You

can also make your own frozen treats using the recipe in this video made by our Canine Welfare Neonatal department: <https://youtu.be/aHZXtjthdbc>

5. Work on greeting behavior

Manners while greeting people is something to practice at any time, whether in the house or out on walks. If the dog you care for becomes overly-excited when visitors come to your home, develop a better technique that works best for you. Find a strategic spot for a tie-down, practice a sit-stay while answering the door, or teach the dog to go to their bed when the doorbell rings. Have a family member leave for a few minutes, then ring the doorbell for practice.

6. Groom, groom, groom

Grooming keeps our Retrievers looking their best and is also a wonderful interactive activity that dogs enjoy. Spend a little extra time each day on these sessions... your dog will look and feel amazing!

7. Watch those waistlines

If your activity level has declined, so has the dog's, and they can pack on pounds pretty quickly. If you notice that the dog in your care is gaining (or losing) weight, please contact a member of the Breeding department for diet advice. Breeder dogs need to stay at a [good body condition](#) in order to do their job for GDB.

8. Catch them red-pawed!

Does the breeder in your home love to sneak snacks off the floor, coffee table, or counters? Time for some set-ups to show them that you're watching them! While prevention is the best strategy for keeping food temptations away, catching a dog in the act while they are using their ninja skills to sneak that snack can be very effective.

9. Purchase a new toy

Nothing beats a new Nylabone or a novel tug toy. The act of chewing actually releases happy brain chemicals and helps animals relax. Have plenty at home already? Try rotating them! Put half of the toys away for a week, then bring them back out and put the other half away. Every time they switch, the dog will think they just scored with new toys.

10. Indoor games

Dogs love hide and seek; it keeps them active and mentally stimulated. Simply put the dog on a sit stay, and then go hide in another room with treat in hand. Call the dog and let them find you! Obedience sessions can also be enjoyable and a way to keep dogs sharp and paying attention.

11. Zen out together

Is there a better way to destress than getting a massage? Dogs love them too! Simply sit on the floor with them and start massaging. Gently rubbing their bodies, legs, and head can not only make them super relaxed, but also give you a chance to check them over for any bumps or injuries.

We hope this gives you some ideas to try and helps to keep both you and our breeder dogs content and happy at home!