



Does your dog get enough exercise?

Did you know that your dog doesn't only need physical exercise to be healthy and stable but that he also needs

MENTAL STIMULATION

Just like it is important for your dog to move to keep his muscles healthy, it is important for him to use his brain to keep his head healthy. A dog that has the opportunity to use his **brain** will be more stable and more self-confident.

Mental stimulation is important for your dog and doesn't ask for a lot of material, planning or time to add it in the daily life of your dog.

To help you we give you some **examples** of mental stimulation activities for your dog:



Go for a walk in a different environment and don't be afraid to think out of the box when trying to find a **new location**. Don't only think about a different forests or streets but also:

- The parking lot of a shopping mall
- An industrial area
- The square after the market has ended
- A school yard after school hours
- A neighbours or friends garden
- The streets after a fair has ended
- An empty play ground
- An outdoor statue museum
- ...

Have **social activities** with your dogs like:

- Social walks with human friends
- Social walks with dog friends
- Visits to family and friends
- Meet new animal friends
- Have your dog help you in the garden
- Make a snowman together
- Clean out the garden shed together
- Organise/Participate in a sniffing garden or enriched environment
- ...



Make your **usual walks more interesting** by:

- Doing some treat search (throw some treats around and let your dog sniff them out)
- Have a sausage tree (put some treats – preferably something more spreadable - on a tree or another object on your way and let your dog sniff them out and lick them off)
- Let your dog decide where to go and just follow
- Walk on different surfaces
- Hide some treats or toys under a pile of leaves and let your dog find them
- ...



What to do on a **stormy day**?
If it is too bleak to go out, you can still give your dog some mental stimulation:

- Use a sniffing mat
- Sniff out the treat under some cans
- Clean out some cabinets together
- Hide some treats or toys around the house and let your dog go on a sniffing hunt
- ...

Also think about **daily things** like:

- Letting your dog sniff your clothes when you were out
- Letting your dog sniff through your bags when returning from shopping
- Include your dog in using new things

What are **important rules** during mental stimulation exercises for your dog?

- **Alternate** your activities often enough to keep it interesting

Make sure that you have enough options to do with your dog so you don't have to do the same things every week

- Give your dog a **choice**

Let your dog choose if he wants to do something or not, if he wants to continue, where he wants to sniff, etc. Give him enough freedom to practice his choice, e.g. think about a long loose leash

- **Never force** your dog to do something

Forcing your dog will only make him stressed and will have the opposite effect of good mental stimulation

- Use your dogs **different senses** to stimulate him (nose, eyes, ears, touch)

Sniffing is important for your dog because it has a calming effect and gives him the opportunity to learn a lot about his environment, but your dog has other senses too that can be used in mental stimulation

- Give your dog the opportunity to **figure it out by himself**

Let your dog take his time to explore things by himself, to decide whether he wants to do something or not, to finish what he is doing, to learn by himself. Don't intervene too quickly. Keep quite and observe and enjoy how your dog learns

- Keep your dogs **health and age** in mind when planning something

Don't make your dog do things that will give him pain