

**Boredom Busters!**

**Enrichment Activities to Share with Your Guide Dog**

While we all find ourselves homebound, you may be wondering to yourself, is there something more I can be doing for my guide right now? The answer is yes! Dogs sense changes too… and they may be wondering why you’re not heading to the bus stop this morning, or, like the kids out of school, are hanging from the chandeliers and driving their parents a little crazy.

We thought we’d put together a list of ideas for you to keep your dogs entertained, safe, healthy, and maybe even a little smarter (is that possible??). Here we go!

1. Get out the clicker! - Dogs love to learn new tricks and behaviors, and clicker training can be fun for both dog and person. Try teaching them to shake paws, or better yet, to stay out of the kitchen! You can also improve their down positioning while settled under a chair. Practice this at home and you’ll thank yourself when those restaurants open again!
2. Turn mealtime into game! - How long does it take for your dog to eat? 5 seconds? 5 nanoseconds? Try prolonging it with a new meal toy! Food toys like Buster Cubes make your dog work for their meal in a really fun way. They’ll love rolling it around to release the food! (Hint… don’t water down the kibble before adding it to the toy). Here’s a link to check out:

<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->

1. Work on recall! - What’s one of the most important safety commands you can work on with your 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 your kibble for rewards… we want your dog quivering in their paws waiting to come running to you! This will also provide some great exercise.
2. Get those booties out! – Summer is just around the corner, along with its hot pavement. Remember last year when you first got those booties out and your dog was doing gymnastics trying to shake them off their paws? Start bootie introductions now! Put them on, and play with your dog so they learn that booties mean fun. A five minute bootie exposure 3-4 times a week will make your dog a bootie master (And you too! The more you put them on, the easier it becomes).
3. Stuff a Kong! - Need some quiet time to yourself? No problem, freeze one of your dog’s meals in their Kong. To do this, simply 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 entrance with a spoonful of peanut butter. Place it in the freezer and a few hours later… voila! You’ve just created the best “pupsicle” ever. It will take your 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!)
4. Work on greeting behavior! - One of the most common complaints we hear on follow up is, “my dog is too energetic when people come to the door!” Ever wanted to practice a better strategy but life got too busy? Well, here’s your chance! Whether it be finding a strategic spot for a tie-down, practicing a sit-stay while answering the door, or teaching your dog to go to their bed when the doorbell rings, this is an ideal time to find the best technique for you. Have a family member leave for a few minutes, then ring the doorbell for practice!
5. Listen to the lectures! - Many of the questions our support center gets, have answers right in our lectures online! But who of us remembers ALL of that information? Take a break from your Netflix binge and settle into the lecture of your choice on guidedogs.com, you may be surprised by the hints and tips you’ll pick up!
6. Keep your dog beautiful! - It’s spring, which means your dog is about to explode into a million little hairs all over your house as they shed out that winter coat. Grooming keeps them 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, your dog’s has too, and they can pack on pounds pretty quickly. If your dog is eating more than 2 cups of food a day, consider a food reduction of a half cup. Or, if they are already eating 2 cups a day, perhaps order a low-calorie food the next time you purchase. Almost all dog food brands have a weight control option… check it out!
8. Catch them red pawed! - Do you have a savvy dog that loves to sneak snacks off the floor, coffee table, or counters? Time for some set ups to show your dog that you’re watching them! While prevention is the best strategy for keeping food temptations away, catching your 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. 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 your 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 your dog on a sit stay, and then go hide in another room with treat in hand. Call your dog and let them find you! Obedience sessions can also be enjoyable and a way to keep your dog sharp and paying attention!
11. Zen out together! - Is there a better way to destress than getting a massage? Try giving one to your dog! 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 your dog content and happy at home!

Cheers,

Your Field Service Manager Team