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It goes without saying that your dog needs physical exercise in order to stay healthy. But what about your dog's mental health?

Like people, dogs can also experience feelings of boredom when there's a lack of mental stimulation in their lives. A dog that's bored can seek excitement through destructive behaviour like tearing apart pillows or chewing your favourite pair of shoes. The best way to prevent this from happening is to ensure that your dog has something to keep his mind occupied.

Here are a few ways to keep your dog from getting bored:

- **Get your dog new toys.** Look for dog toys that were specially created to provide mental stimulation and relief from boredom. For example, hollow toys that can be filled with bite-sized dry dog food. The food is released when your dog rolls the toy around with his nose or paw.
- **Play hide and seek.** First, show your dog a treat or favourite toy, then make sure he sees you put it behind a door or a chair. Once the treat or toy is hidden, instruct your dog to find it. When he does, shower him with praise and give him the treat/toy. If your dog is able to find the treat or toy easily, gradually make it harder for him.
- **Teach your dog a new trick.** With a little patience, even old dogs can learn new tricks. And pups are always eager to try something new.

- **Create an obstacle course.** Depending on the weather and how much room you have, you can do this either outdoors or indoors. Use large cardboard boxes or kitchen chairs as tunnels or wooden planks as bridges. Take your dog over, under, and through the various obstacles. Be sure to provide a reward whenever he successfully gets through the course.
- **Fun with a crate and some rags.** Fill a plastic milk crate with old towels or clean cloth rags. Use some of the rags to wrap up your dog's favourite treats. Turn the crate upside-down, with some of the rags sticking out of the holes in the crate. See how long it takes for your dog to either pull the rags through the holes, or overturn the crate to get to the treats. Be sure he doesn't chew or swallow the rags.

Remember, always monitor your dog's activities to assure his safety.

Don't wait until you're bored to create some fun excitement with your dog. Pay attention to his mood and swing into action. A happy dog has the power to make everyone in your household happier.

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