

# Ask The Dog Guy's Brain Drain Activities For Puppies & Dogs

[www.askthedogguy.com](http://www.askthedogguy.com)



## Intro

Suppose you watch a litter of puppies develop without too much human interference? You'll find they are very active (playful) mentally and physically for at least twenty minutes out of every waking hour. That's a lot of pouncing, wrestling, chewing, competing for resources like nursing, etc. They rarely get anywhere near that when they move in with a human family. As a result, they are far more prone to be relentless with their mouthing, nipping, biting, and jumping, have the Zoomies/witching hour syndrome towards nightfall and challenging to focus, let alone retain any training without the crutch of treats.

Bottom line, regardless of age, any puppy or dog that is getting appropriate mental and physical stimulation is going to be easier to live with, AND he or she will be easier to focus during training AND will retain what you're trying to teach much better.

What follows are recommendations regarding ways to constructively stimulate a puppy or dog without it being overly demanding for the puppy or dog's owner. I refer to those sorts of toys as autonomous, whereas toys you interact directly, like a ball for fetch, or a tug, for tug of war, I refer to as interactive toys.



# Cycle (Rotate) The Toys

## Recommendation #1

I can't emphasize this enough (it's why it's recommendation #1), don't give your puppy or dog all their toys at once. Instead, one for the crate, one for the areas they are being supervised in, and as interest wanes, remove that toy and take one out of the storage closet to replace. You'll get way more interest (time to yourself) if you rotate through your dog's toy collection. You might end up rotating through them all in a single day or a week. Doesn't matter. Just rotate!



## Choose VERY Carefully

### Recommendation #2

Pick toys (autonomous) that won't be easily confused with household items and clothing, so no fabric toys.



## You Don't Need Dozens

### Recommendation #3

If you're rotating the toys, you don't normally need more than six different. So, spend the money and buy quality, so you only buy once.



## Interactive Toys (Vs. Autonomous Toys)

### Recommendation #4

Interactive toys like those used for fetch and, or tug of war should also be kept in the closet for playing with at your convenience.

Most dogs enjoy playing tug of war and done correctly; it can be an educational experience as well. Fetch, however, depends on genetics. If you have a dog strongly inclined to retrieve, if you handle it correctly in the early stages of life, you'll be able to provide far more exercise, far more easily than other dog owners. However, even if you have a dog inclined towards retrieving, it's best, while still a puppy, to leave your puppy wanting just a little more so you don't discourage. For example, if a puppy willingly completes five retrieves and then 'poops-out,' do only 3. As your puppy matures, you can do more, but better to underdo it in the early stages.

## Commercially Available

### Toys

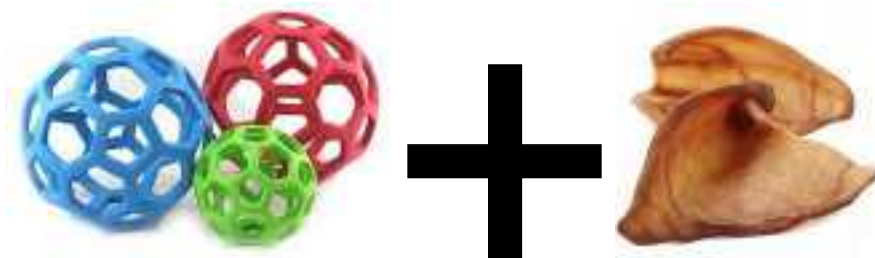
Some of what you find below you've probably seen before. **However, pay special attention to my "Make It Better" recommendations on how to physically alter or enhance them. I've found it takes the interest level up significantly.** You can find them in most pet supply shops and for purchase online. The links you find are shortcuts to Amazon.



## Here Are My Top 6 Picks And A Few Bonus Ideas





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### #1 - 'Holee' Roller (Puppies)



**Make It Better:** Holee Rollers come in various sizes. The trick is to stretch one of the holes out and stuff inside a pig's ear or something as appealing and large enough to be as close to impossible to remove as possible. For the really persistent clever dogs, you can put a smaller roller with a pig's ear inside, inside a larger roller.

#### If You Can't Find Locally – Here Is The Amazon Link:







		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">HOL-ee Roller Original - Various Sizes</a></li></ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">Pig Ears for Dogs   All Natural, Single Ingredient, Dehydrated Chew (Made in Canada   5 Pack) - Hopefully, you can find locally as you don't need five, but this was the smallest Amazon quantity I could find that was quality</a></li></ul>

## # 2- Kong's Goodie Bone

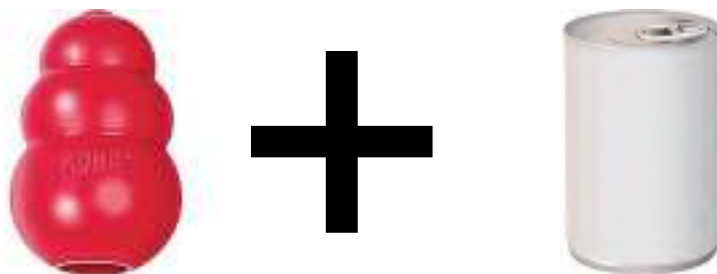


**Make It Better:** The Bully Sticks seen on the right must be thick enough to barely stuff into the holes in the Goodie Bone AND ideally should be sawed off, so there's no more than ½" protruding. The Goodie Bone comes in several sizes. Unless the dog is a toy breed, always get the largest. The added weight when twisting and turning is far more of a challenge. If your dog is a hard-core powerful jawed chewer, get the black version vs. the red, as it's a little tougher. Note, when the bully stick has been gnawed down level with the Goodie bone, remove it and add another; otherwise, your goodie bone is going to be damaged.

### If You Can't Find Locally – Here Is The Amazon Link:

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">Kong Goodie Bone (Red - Good for most dogs.)</a></li></ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">Kong' Extreme' (Black - For Powerful Chewers)</a></li></ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">Bully Sticks - These are supposed to be the thick ones which are what generally fit tightly. You may be better off going to a pet supply place where you can eyeball them.</a></li></ul>

### # 3 - Traditional 'Kong'



**Make It Better:** 'Kongs' are familiar to most dog owners. I've found, though, that the traditional stuffing of a biscuit treat' doesn't work as well as stuffing it full of the canned version of the dog's food and sometimes even freezing it to keep the dog busier, longer. The biscuits usually come out too quickly or get jammed and frustrate the dog. I don't recommend the often-recommended peanut butter or cheese-whiz approach as those are not contributors to a balanced diet and are unnecessary caloric additions. Red Kongs for puppies and most dogs, Black Kongs for hard-core powerful jawed chewers. Better to have one in reserve so buy two.

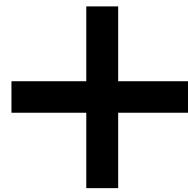
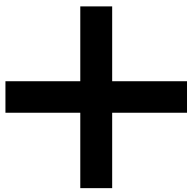
**If You Can't Find Locally – Here Is The Amazon Link:**

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">Traditional Kong (Red - Good for Most Dogs)</a></li></ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">Kong Extreme (For Powerful Chewers)</a></li></ul>

## #4 - NylaBones



or

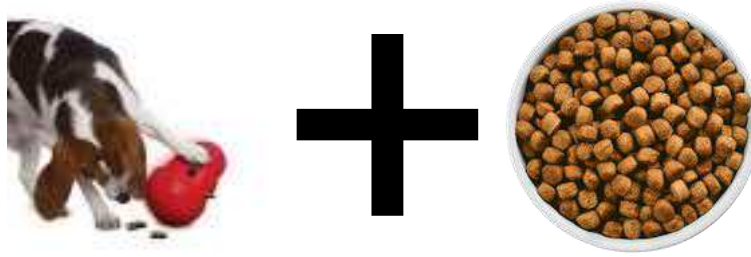


**Make It Better:** I drill 5 or 6 ¼" holes into these and then keep the holes stuffed with wet dog food. Otherwise, it's pretty hit or miss as to whether a dog takes to them. As you can see there are many sizes to choose from. ALWAYS, go larger, as it's more activity for the dog. (On average dogs seem to prefer this over the bone-shaped)

[If You Can't Find Locally – Here Is The Amazon Link:](#)

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Wishbone Shaped Nylabones</a></li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Bone Shaped Nylabones (I wouldn't fixate on the 'flavored' ones if you're going to drill and stuff which works far better.)</a></li> </ul>

## # 5(a) - Wobbler (Kong)



**Make It Better:** Kong makes this is well. It unscrews and you put the dog's kibble in there instead of a bowl. Actually, they recommend treats, which you could do, but I think you'll find that if your dog has to work for one or more his or her dinners your day will go a lot smoother, and he or she will have a lot more fun.

[If You Can't Find Locally – Here Is The Amazon Link:](#)



## Non-Commercial Options & Ideas

### #5(b) - Home Made 'Wobbler'



**Make It Better:** You can stuff a water bottle with some kibble and have a similar impact as the commercial Wobbler mentioned above. However, you have to supervise your dog, at least for the first few interactions as they can chew through the plastic of a water bottle, and potentially ingest some jagged bits. Most dogs just like the crunching sound and the kibble falling out.

## # 6 - Marrow Bones



These are straight from the butcher type bones. Not the smoked/processed ones found in pet supply stores. There are often a lot of cautionary tales floating about the dangers of giving a dog a bone, raw or not. Break a tooth, perforate a bowel, etc. All possible. However, possible doesn't mean probable. So, you'll have to make your own call for your own dog. I have found that introducing a hard bone or dog toy to an adult dog only used to clamping down on a rubber toy or a stuffed animal are the ones that run into trouble. However, puppies don't have the jaw strength and so seem to become bone-chewing literate and have less trouble. However, I would for any dog only introduce the bone for a few minutes at a time for a few days so that their digestive system has some time to adapt. Otherwise, you could trigger a bout of diarrhea. Regularly checking your puppy or dog's stool whenever you incrementally, introduce something new, is the best way to gauge whether you need to slow down, or can allow more. If it's fine, more time, if it's looser than usual, slow down.

## Bonus Idea - Nosey Dogs

A popular and totally unnecessary current trend is to feed in a special bowl so the puppy (for all the wrong reasons) is forced to eat slower. Puppies are supposed to eat quickly. However, it is well worth approaching the way you feed your puppy creatively so you can several times a day reasonably tax its mind.

Most people simply put a puppy's food in a bowl and stand back. It is far better to turn this daily necessity into a 10 - 20-minute outlet for mental stimulation, rather than a 60 second 'scarfing.'

While there are also quite a few 'find the treat' type contraptions available, I've found they provide only minimal short-term impact. They take the average pup a little while to figure out and ultimately provide very little useful stimulation. What I recommend instead is using the Wobbler mentioned above or better yet train your dog to use his or her nose to find their dinner. There are two ways to do this.

1. It's Easter - Find Your Eggs/aka Feed The Chickens
2. John Wade's Nosey Dogs - Search The House For Your Dinner, Dog!

### 1. It's Easter - Find Your Eggs/aka Feed The Chickens

Instead of feeding your dog indoors, you can grab a cup of coffee and fling the kibble into the grass, leaves, snow, etc. and tell your dog, "It's Easter! Go find the eggs!" and watch while you're drinking your morning coffee, and, or evening tea.

### 2. John Wade's Nosey Dog - Search The House For Your Dinner, Dog!

In my opinion, this is the best feeding approach as it incrementally teaches your dog to search high and low, a portion of the entire home with his or her nose (more taxing/challenging/stimulating) (as opposed to eyes) to find their meal, and you can regularly easily change it up. Learning to use and ultimately using their nose to find where their dinner has been hidden takes the 'puzzle' and the subsequent impact on mental stimulation to another 'level.' I've found using this approach for meals quickly becomes the highlight of a dog's day. Here's step by step instructions on how to do it:

[Download John Wade's Nosey Dog - Search For Dinner PDF](#)

- John Wade  ([www.askthedogguy.com](http://www.askthedogguy.com))

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## Disclosure

It is possible that some of the links I provide (on my websites or in emails etc.) to places where you can purchase any of the products I recommend (usually because I have personal experience with them but certainly because I have thoroughly checked them out) may result in a small (trust me, it's tiny) portion of your purchase being directed to my coffers. I periodically review these links to make sure that the price is the best or close to the best, but those are not the only parameters. I also try to source North American whenever possible (at least until China gets its manufacturing, intellectual property, and human-rights ethics sorted out). The reputation of the supplier/manufacturer is something else I take into account. Feel free to do your online research, or if they're well-stocked, and you're not too COVID-19, adverse try a local store.