

Advice On How to Develop a Bond with Your New Dog

The most important step when you have a new dog, regardless of the age, is to bond with your dog and the human/dog bond is what your relationship with your dog will be built on.

As with all good things, every day is a learning day and there are so many activities you can do with your dog but the bond can always be worked on. He needs to feel that he is safe with you but at the same time, can be a little independent. As tempting as it can be to want to shower your dog with love, it's important that your dog isn't overwhelmed (especially important if you have young children).

Allow your dog to initiate contact and if they approach you, always touch the part of the body that is nearest you. For example, if your dog is walking towards you, don't reach over his head, reach your hand out and let him sniff. If your dog doesn't come towards you, this isn't a bad thing, it just means he's getting used to his new surroundings and family. Always remember, this is another big change for your dog.

Your dog may be subdued during the first few days, this is perfectly normal and once the dog has settled a little more, they may show new behaviours. Take things at the dog's pace and use this time to get to know your dog and know that there's no harm in taking time out for a little while.

As with all training with dogs, consistency is key. All members of the family should be on board and know what commands should be given to your dog, otherwise, your dog may just end up confused and frustrated. Your dog will need boundaries in much the same way we experience boundaries in daily life but how you communicate your wishes to your dog is also important.

One of the major stumbling blocks experienced in rescue work is owners not knowing how to communicate with their dog and everyone feeling as though they can't cope and building that bond will go a long way to helping you train your dog and also train yourself how to communicate with your dog, always using positive reinforcement (rewarding good behaviours).

Dogs will look to us for emotional support and companionship the same way we want that from our dogs. Praise your dog for the things he does right, whether this be affection, treats or toys. Your dog will then associate those behaviours with good things. If your dog is displaying unwanted behaviours, ignore this behaviour and the dog soon gets to learn that the don't get anything when they behave this way. Also, try not to compare your new dog to a dog you have previously owned. They are all as individual as the people you meet and building up a bond with your dog may take time.

Enrichment is the ideal opportunity to build that bond, be it through simple praise, spending time together on a walk or playing together. Of course, this is only a handful of bonding exercises. You could ask a behaviourist for exercises you can do with your own dog or look online.

Mental stimulation is a very important part of a dog's day, especially if there is a reason you can't go for walks (if the weather's too hot/too cold) and simple games such as 'Which hand is it in?' go a long way in building that initial bond in the early days. Even buying your dog toys that he can chew on is offering him mental stimulation and is good for when he wants to chill out on his own and should not be stopped. Just like us, dogs need downtime as well.

INDOOR ENRICHMENT

SCATTER FEEDING
Move your dog to a different room.
Take a bowlful of his food and scatter through a room (or rooms if your dog is finding this too easy)
Let your dog back in and let him for his sniffathon. This is a good way to feed a dog if they have kibble and tend to wolf their meals

ROLLING FOOD IN A TEA TOWEL
Lay the towel out flat and scatter the food at varying distances over the whole area.
Starting at one end, roll up the towel towards the other end.
Release your dog to find the treats by pushing the towel with their nose or feet to unravel it.

Once your dog has got the hang of this, try hiding food or a favourite toy under cushions or under furniture to make it a little more challenging. Try and work out what is a high value treat for your dog. It could be chicken, cheese, blueberries or just training treats. Try using scented items and rewarding with a high value treat when found.



ROOLO

Of course, there are also puzzles like the Roolo where you can put small treats or kibble inside and your dog has to try and get them by rolling the Roolo around. (Probably best done in a room with lots of space!)

KONGS are always a firm favourite but make sure you get a size appropriate one for your dog. Peanut butter (xylitol free) or mashed banana, can be put inside the Kong and frozen or there is a list full of recipes on the Kong page.
https://www.kongcompany.com/cuisine/





SNUFFLE MAT

Snuffle mats can be purchased just about anywhere that sells dog related items and come in different sizes and designs or as complicated as you choose and again are good for dogs who are overly fast eaters

LICKIMAT

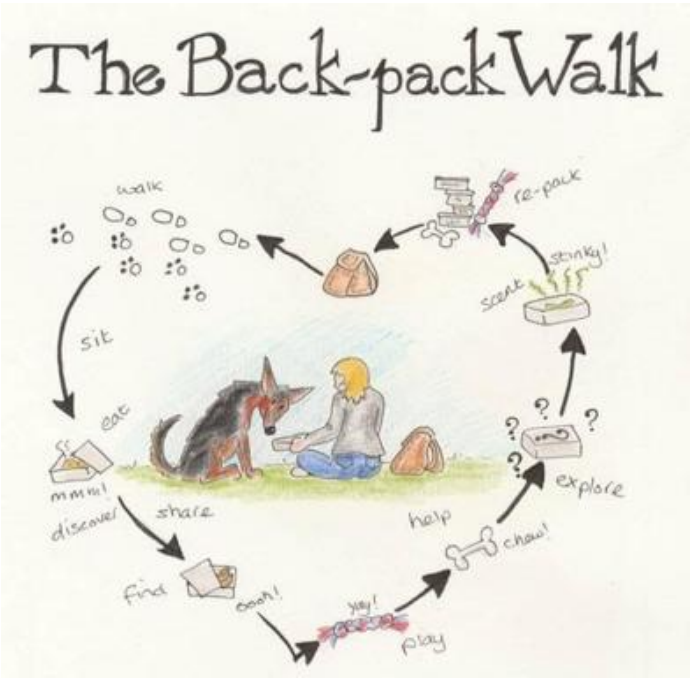
As well as being a good enrichment tool, Lickimats are good for if you need your dog to stand still for a moment. Many dog owners stick them to the bathroom wall while they are bathing their dogs



OUTDOOR ENRICHMENT

For the more energetic dog lover and if you have a garden big enough or there is a class nearby, you could try Agility or Hoopers and if you fancy a bit more of a challenge, Canicross or Mantrailing. Please make sure your dog is fit and healthy before undertaking outdoor activities.

THE BACKPACK/RUCKSACK WALK



For something a bit more sedate, the Backpack Walk is a great way to build your bond with your dog.

You need a long line and a treat pouch. You also need, unsurprisingly, a rucksack. In it should be two small Tupperware-type tubs – one containing a different novel scent each time and the other a novel food. In the bag is also a chew and a 'thing' – just anything.