

by **SANDY ROBINS** photos **JASON DONNELLY**

Pets left alone for hours often suffer from separation anxiety and/or boredom as they wait for their owners to return home. Loneliness can lead to unwanted behaviors such as chewing on your favorite shoes, hiding, and even vomiting. Pet stress can also be triggered by common situations such as houseguests, renovations, or even a new baby. Add fireworks, loud music, and raucous parties to the list too.

Enrichment toys offer different levels of difficulty and a variety of challenges. Most are reward-based, which means they involve yummy treats or food. For cats, catnip buds or even a catnip spray will help rev up feline curiosity and lead to pouncing and playing.

THE INS AND OUTS OF TOYS

Pounce on these tips for sharing puzzle toys with your furry friend.

» **Start with simple toys,** then let your pet's intellect and curiosity dictate interest in more advanced games.

» **Choose toys** that are appropriate for your dog's size and chewing style (such as teething, moderate, aggressive, or aging). Toys that are too small for your dog can be a choking hazard.

» **Introduce pets to puzzle toys** by placing treats in sections that are left open. Once pets' noses take over, close the sections after filling and let the games begin.

» **Some puzzle toys** can be used as feeders. Just fill them with your pet's daily food allowance.

» **Slow down dogs** that eat too fast with food puzzle toys.

» **Dogs that refuse to eat** will often eat more when a puzzle toy makes them work for their food.

» **Wash food-dispensing** toys daily and rinse them to avoid the buildup of bacteria.

» **Treats should not** provide more than 10 percent of your pet's daily calorie intake.

PRODUCT KEY

● CAT ● DOG

HAPPY PAWS' TOP PICKS



LINK INTERACTIVE PUZZLE TOY

● Perfect for curious canines, this soft translucent toy lets dogs see and smell their treats while working to get them out. Shift the pieces into different shapes to keep your furry genius engaged. **\$21 (4-piece set), \$38 (8-piece set, shown); Planet Dog; planetdog.com**

PET BEHAVIORISTS SAY THAT **10 MINUTES OF MENTAL STIMULATION** EQUALS 45 MINUTES OF ACTIVE PLAY.



DOG CASINO ●

Smarty-pants pooches need to figure out how to unlock bone pieces to open the drawers and get their rewards. **\$25; Nina Ottosson; outwardhound.com**



TREAT MAZE ●●

Entertain dogs and cats by letting them tap, flip, and tip this toy to get it to dispense delicious morsels. **\$15; Nina Ottosson; outwardhound.com**



KONG DOG TOY ●

Help dogs relieve boredom by giving them an ultra-durable rubber Kong to chew. Fill it with kibble to extend playtime. **\$7–\$25; Kong; amazon.com**



DOG TORNADO ●

Four layers of fun include 12 compartments to hide treats. The spinning movement keeps pets focused. **\$25; Nina Ottosson; outwardhound.com**



ORBEE-TUFF SNOOP ●

Dogs need to nudge, nose, and paw this squishy, translucent toy to find hidden food. **\$21; Planet Dog; planetdog.com**



DOG BRICK ●

Clever compartments flip, slide, or can be removed to offer different challenges every time a dog seeks snacks. **\$25; Nina Ottosson; outwardhound.com**



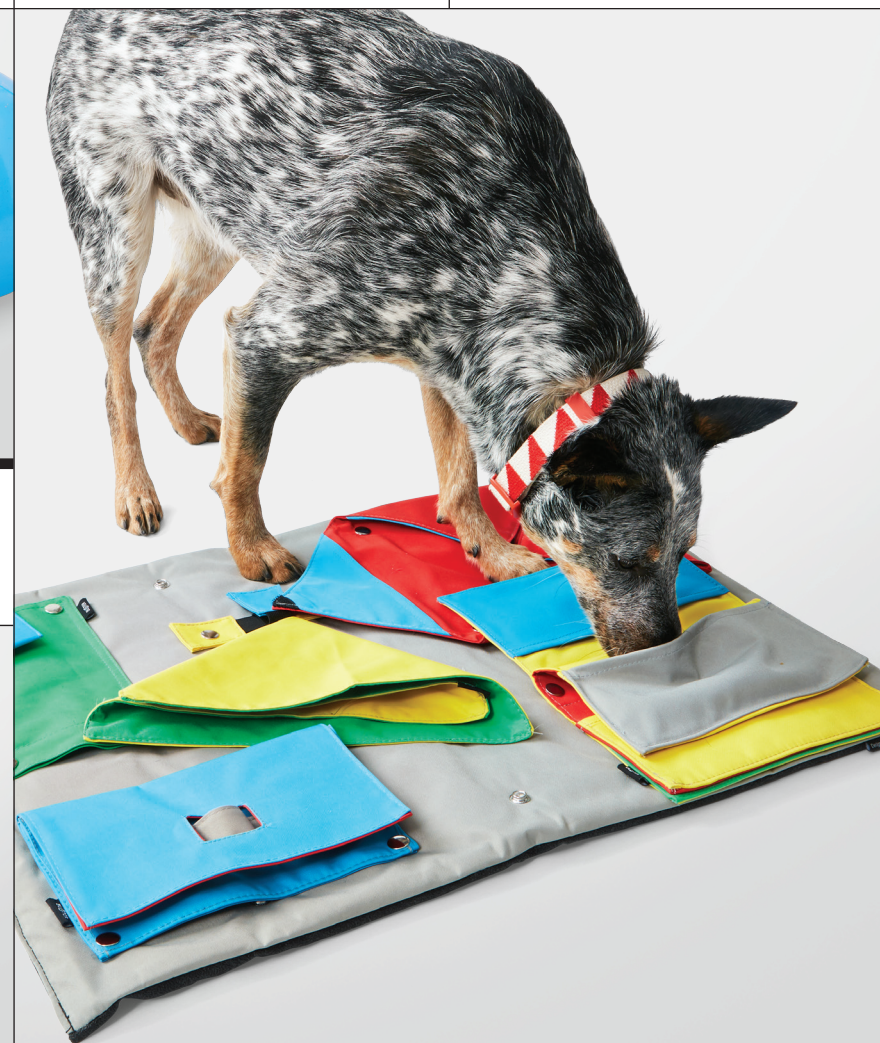
GODOG ROPETEK ●

Made from bonded plastic and tough climbing rope, this large chewable tug toy stands up to vigorous play. **\$10 to \$15; GoDog; amazon.com**



KURGO YARD GAMES TOYS ●

Your dog will love gnawing the colorful chew-tough toys inspired by popular backyard games. **\$8 to \$12; Kurgo; kurgo.com**



BUSTER ACTIVITY MAT ●

Clip activities to this sturdy nylon mat, then challenge your dog to retrieve hidden treasures. The starter set includes three activities; additional ones can be purchased separately. **\$50 for starter set; Kruuse; amazon.com**



CATTY STACKS MODULAR CAT CONDO

Heavy-duty cardboard boxes secure to each other to form climbing structures that keep kitty entertained. Move and rearrange them at will. **\$30 (2-cube kit with 1 bridge); Catty Stacks; amazon.com**



WOOLY SNUFFLE MAT

Perfect for foraging, this washable food mat relies on a dog's sense of smell to snuffle his way through dinner or treat-time fun. **\$40; PAW5; paw5.us**



MAZEE INTERACTIVE TOY

Clearly engaging, this pliable ball lets dogs hear, see, and smell treats as they try to solve the puzzle. **\$22; Planet Dog; planetdog.com**



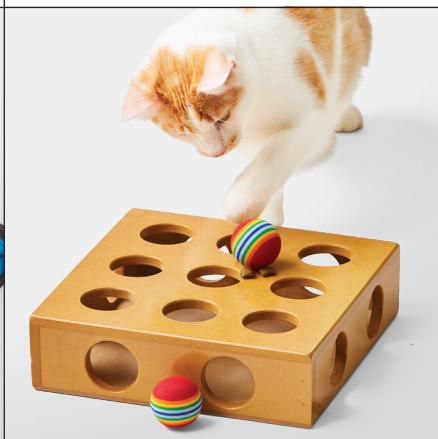
SENSES 2.0 CIRCUIT

Set up a starter track that lets kitty chase after balls. Separately purchased enrichment stations add fun. **\$25 (starter circuit only); Catit; amazon.com**



INDOOR HUNTING FEEDER

Fill them with your cat's daily food allowance, then hide them for a real hunting experience. **\$20; Doc & Phoebe's Cat Co.; docandphoebe.com**



SMARTCAT PEEK-AND-PLAY TOY BOX

Help FiFi hone her hunting and prey-seeking skills by letting her stalk toys positioned inside this sturdy box. **\$20; SmartCat; pioneerpet.com**



REWARDS SHELL TOY

Whether rolling or bouncing, this toy randomly dispenses treats as your dog moves it around. **\$11 to \$16; Kong; dog.com**



ROCK 'N BOWL

Every meal becomes a brain-teasing challenge as your hungry pooch works out a way to get his bowl to dispense kibble. **\$20; PAW5; paw5.us**



DOG TWISTER

White handles must be unlocked to reveal rewards, making this toy fun for savvy canine gamers. **\$25; Nina Ottosson; outwardhound.com**

DIY PUZZLE GAME FOR DOGS

by DEBRA STEILEN

If Max gets bored with the same old stuffed goose and nylon bone, treat him to something more stimulating: the muffin-tin game. Good for puppies, adult dogs, and seniors, this brain-teasing game challenges his senses of smell and sight as he tries to find hidden treats. Here's how to create your own budget-friendly dog game.



1 Place a treat in each well of the muffin tin, then plop a tennis ball on top of each treat. Call your dog over to check it out. You may need to lift one of the balls so your pup sees the tasty bite underneath. Drop the ball back into the well, then urge your dog to find the treat. Praise him like crazy when he's successful.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- A 6- or 12-cup baking tin for regular-size muffins
- 6 or 12 tennis balls
- Tasty, smelly treats cut into small pieces (cheese, turkey, jerky for dogs—things he can't resist!)

2 If your dog doesn't catch on right away, keep providing encouragement and fresh treats. Ruby, a 10-year-old golden retriever, below, associated the scent with the ball and failed to look underneath it for the hidden snack. (She soon caught on. Her sister, Daisy, took a little longer.)

3 Up the difficulty level by leaving some of the wells empty. Your dog will need to use his nose to figure out which wells hide the food.

