

Environmental Enrichment for Kenneled Dogs

by Croney Research Group

What is Environmental Enrichment?

Enrichment is changing an animal's environment to promote behavioral and physical wellness. Enrichment usually involves the addition of objects, social interactions, or other stimulation.

Enrichment should be a **safe and positive experience** for the animal.

Why Do Dogs in Kennels Need Enrichment?

Kennel environments can be stressful for multiple reasons.

The goals of enrichment are to:

- Increase the number and type of behaviors that dogs express
- Give dogs opportunities to express normal behaviors (such as chewing, climbing, and playing)
- Reduce the frequency of abnormal behaviors (such as pacing and excessive barking)
- Increase positive use of the environment
- Improve a dog's ability to cope with challenges

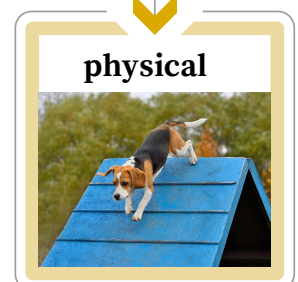
Giving Dogs a Sense of Control

Enrichment gives animals a sense of control in their environment. It allows them to make choices about how to spend their time.

Some types of enrichment can give dogs decision-making and problem-solving opportunities.

Exposure to novel objects and decision-making helps dogs learn that certain behavioral choices lead to specific outcomes (for example, that manipulating a food puzzle predicts the delivery of a tasty treat!).

The 5 types of enrichment



To learn more see our handout, **5 Types of Enrichment for Dogs**.

Reducing Stress for Kenneled Dogs

Stress can have harmful physical and behavioral effects. You can reduce stress by keeping the kennel quiet and comfortable for your dogs. Dogs should be well-socialized, so they are comfortable with people. This is especially important for pregnant or nursing dogs as increased stress can affect the developing puppies.



Environmental enrichment may reduce stress and improve canine welfare!

Enrichment is one important way we can reduce stress. Provide daily enrichment opportunities for your dogs and puppies throughout their time at your kennel. Assess how your dogs' behavior changes when you add certain types of enrichment.

If dogs are afraid or bored with enrichment, try something different. Monitoring your dogs' responses to enrichment can tell you what's working (or not!). Be sure to rotate enrichment to maintain your dog's interest and learn what types they enjoy best.



Identifying Canine Stress

Stress is an animal's inability to cope with their environment. It is important to identify signs of stress in kenneled dogs so that you can minimize it. Signs of stress in dogs include:

- Repetitive behaviors and movements (such as whirling, pacing)
- Excessive vocalization
- Excessive licking or chewing of parts of their body (such as their paws or tail)
- Trying to escape (such as pushing against doors/gates, excessive digging)
- Excessive panting
- Aggression

Watch your dogs' behavior and body language. Keep in mind, each dog may respond to stress a little differently.

You can learn more in our **Dog Body Language Handout**.

