

Boredom



Do not leave your dog for hours at a time.

Dogs are intelligent animals and boredom can have far reaching, negative effects on their behaviour. They deal with boredom in different ways.

They may become destructive, disobedient or bark all the time. Alternatively, they may become depressed and sleep for most of the time. As a responsible owner it is your responsibility to ensure your dog is kept occupied and happy.

Follow these tips to keep your dog happy.

All dogs can become bored if left alone all day. Try to avoid leaving your dog alone for longer than 4 hours at a time. If this is not possible then consider the following techniques.

Dogs are naturally scavengers and, if left alone, would spend the day looking for food. You can exploit this behaviour by hiding food around the house, or placing treats in specially made toys.

Another good idea is to cut holes in an empty water bottle so that your dog has to roll it around to get at his treats (remove the lid first so that your dog does not choke on it). Hide food in an empty cardboard box filled with crumpled up newspaper or hide treats around the garden. Be creative and think of as many ways as you can to make feeding time a fun game.

Remember that a hungry dog may become aggressive if he is made to work too hard for his food. Always make sure that your dog has had an easy meal before playing these games to ensure he does not become frustrated.

If your dog likes to dig, build him a sand or earth pit and hide toys inside it so that he can spend time digging them up. Provide your dog with plenty of chews – this will be particularly helpful if your dog likes to chew things he shouldn't. Rotate chews such as pig's ears, large beef bones, synthetic bones and tripe chews so that he doesn't get bored.



Dogs love to run outside and play and communicate with other dogs. Make sure you give your dog lots of exercise and the chance to play with you and other dogs as often as possible. Take a special toy for walks to amuse your dog. Actively playing with your dog will tire him out much more quickly than just walking with him. Play hide and seek with your dog and reward him when he finds you.

The sky's the limit! Think of as many different ways of keeping your dog amused as you can.

Please remember that in Malta, as in many countries, there is no legal requirement to have undergone any training before you can call yourself an animal trainer or behaviourist. Ensure that before you accept and follow any advice from veterinary clinic staff, trainers and rescue charities, you check their experience and credentials. The MSPCA has UK qualified behavioural and Registered Veterinary Nursing personnel on staff and the information in this document has been collated from other qualified professionals as well.

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