

# Ditch the Dish:

## Using food-dispensing toys



If you feed your dog kibble from a bowl, you may be wasting opportunities to enrich your dog's mind by letting them exercise their natural tendencies to forage for food. Dogs in the wild or on the street spend up to 80% of their time searching for things to eat, and this tires them out. It's such a strong instinct that studies have shown that dogs (and other animals) prefer to perform tasks for food rather than get it for free (called the "contrafreeloading" tendency).

Dogs who have excess energy, dogs who tend to eat very quickly, or dogs who have decreased physical exercise for any reason, will all benefit from all the mental stimulation gained by "hunting" for all their food, each and every day.

Food dispensing toys have become very popular and there are many companies who manufacture and sell all different styles. I've put together a list of my favorite, as well as some do-it-yourself, low cost options.

### 1) *The Kong*

Comes in different colours/strengths. Easy level: put some kibbles or moist treats inside and let the dog roll it around. For heavy chewers, soak their kibble in hot water, mix with some wet food or other meat, and then freeze. Use as large a size as possible.

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



### 2) *The Kong Wobbler*

Made by the same company as the rubber Kongs, but this one is made of hard plastic and is large enough to fit a whole meal of kibble inside. It has a weighted bottom and the dog knocks it about to get the kibble out.

<https://www.kongcompany.com/products/for-dogs/interactive/wobbler-2/wobbler/>

### 3) *Tricky Treat Ball*

An orange, soft rubber ball that fits a whole meal of kibble. The dog rolls the ball along the ground and the kibble falls out.

<http://www.omegapaw.com/products/tricky-treat-ball.html>

### 3) *Premier Toys*

Premier makes a variety of toys including the Kibble Nibble, Tug A Jug and Magic Mushroom. These are all fairly durable, hard plastic toys that are for the more advanced food hunter.

<http://store.intl.petsafe.net/en-ca/play-challenge/treat-dispensing-dog-toys>

### 4) *WestPaw Tux and Toppl*

These are very durable rubber toys that don't hold kibble, but can be packed with wet food, large biscuits or raw food and frozen. Some dogs really like being able to see the food they're working on.

<https://www.westpawdesign.com/dogs/dog-toys/zogoflex-dog-toys>

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### 5) Nina Ottosson Food Puzzles

These are more complex, pricier puzzles that are designed to be used together with your dog, not left alone. If your dog is a real brainiac, these might be a good choice.

<http://www.nina-ottosson.com/>

### 6) Starmark Toys

These are durable toys that come with hard edible treats but can be re-stuffed with a variety of treats after those are gone. They include the Everlasting Treat Ball, Everlasting Fire Hydrant and the BobALot.

<http://starmarkacademy.com/products/>

### 7) Planet Dog Orbee-Tuff Snoop

Reported to be very chew-resistant and good for those dogs who destroy their toys! This one is simple yet challenging and engaging.

<http://www.planetdog.com/orbee-tuff-snoop>

### 8) Do It Yourself: Dinner Box

If your dog doesn't consume cardboard, you can pack some treats in a box, put it another box, and another one, etc and then give it to your dog to shred.

### 9) Do It Yourself: Muffin Tin Game

Take a muffin tin, put some treats in each cup and then put a ball in each cup so your dog has to get the balls out to access the treats.

### 10) Do It Yourself: Bottle Toy

Put some treats into an empty, rinsed pop bottle and let your dog get them out!

### 11) Do It Yourself: Treasure Hunt

Take your dog's kibble, throw the whole thing into your yard and let your dog snuffle it out. If you don't have an outdoor space, you can use a mat with long fibers and hide treats in there to create a Snuffle Mat.



Most of these toys should be available at your local pet store, and if they are not there you can ask them to order them.

### **Safety First!**

The first time you give any toy to your dog, monitor them to make sure that they don't consume any parts.

Always start with an easy toy and work your way up. Some dogs are nervous of the toys at first, or may give up if they are too hard. These are supposed to be fun, not frustrating!