

# ENRICH YOUR PET'S ENVIRONMENT

Environmental enrichment can help improve your pet's quality of life and decrease destructive behaviors. This technique is all about creating an environment that offers new, exciting, and rewarding opportunities that focus on your pet's instincts and natural behaviors.

**Here are some strategies you can try, recommended by behavior expert Jean DeNapoli, DVM**

**Puzzles:** You can buy food puzzles, but you can also create them. Try hiding kibble around the house or throwing some out in the yard. You can turn a cardboard toilet paper roll into a cat treat dispenser by putting treats inside, taping the ends shut, and making holes in the side for your cat to "fish out" the treats.

**Rotate toys:** Leave a couple of favorites out, but then put the rest away so you can offer "Monday toys," "Tuesday toys," etc. Each day will be a surprise!

**Treat variety:** Start by stuffing an easy-to-clean toy with peanut butter (no xylitol) one day. The next day, use canned food as the "filler," the following day try whipped cream. Cats may like chicken baby food, tuna, or cat treats.



**TV:** Some cats and dogs will enjoy having the TV turned to Animal Planet or a similar station. There are even video loops that you can purchase that are specifically made to entertain pets.

**Scents:** Try a variety of animal or food scents on non-edible toys. You can purchase animal scents (i.e. rabbit scent), which are used for training hunting dogs, or try food scents such as a drop of vanilla.



**Crate:** Your pet's crate can be a cave, hide out, or comfortable resting area if it is open and available.



**Empty boxes:** These can provide hours of play for cats. You can make entry and exit holes in them, or leave them open on one side. Offering different sizes or moving them to other parts of the house can keep things interesting.



**Climbing:** Cats enjoy vertical space and climbing. You can buy or make a climbing tree, arrange furniture to allow climbing from one piece to another, offer a window bed, or build elevated walkways.

**Repurpose children's toys:** Some sturdy children's play toys can be converted to dog obstacles and playscapes. For example, you could set up play tunnels, toddler slides, and sand boxes (with buried chew toys or treats).

**Bird feeder:** Placing a bird feeder outside the window can keep pets amused. However, you'll need to monitor interactions as some pets could be overstimulated by having other animals so close (especially any visiting squirrels).

Usdan Institute  
for Animal  
Health Education

**AMC**  
— SINCE 1910 —  
ANIMAL MEDICAL CENTER

[www.amcny.org/usdaninstitute](http://www.amcny.org/usdaninstitute)