

Integrative Veterinary Care
Fun Things to Do with Kong Toys
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Kongs are truly amazing toys. The black ones are practically indestructible, and they are available in a variety of sizes. They have nifty little rings inside that grip food treats, and when chewed on their squishiness resembles that of prey. You can throw them, you can stuff them, you can hide them, you can bury them. Some Kongs float, others are made with built-in scent pads to make them useful for teaching tracking skills.

Stuffed Kongs

The best thing you can do with Kongs is stuff them. The regular size Kong will just barely hold two whole Iams Less Active biscuits. You can hide Kongs stuffed with dry biscuits in the yard or in the house for your dog to find. You can stuff a Kong with your dog's regular dry kibble soaked in water or broth, maybe with some freeze-dried beef liver, baby food, or canned food mixed in, and freeze it overnight to make a "pupsicle" which can be given right before you leave or when you put your dog outside for the day, to make him look forward to your leaving or to going outside (or into his crate, or whatever).

Hanging Kongs

A ¼ inch rope just barely fits through the small hole of a Kong toy. You can thread a rope through, tie a knot near the small hole so you can hang the Kong upside down, and fill it with dry kibble and freeze-dried beef liver. If you hang this upside down (big hole facing the sky) above your dog's standing nose height, he will have to work really hard to get the food out!

Buried Kongs

For dogs who love to dig, Kongs can be stuffed with dry treats (freeze-dried liver and/or biscuits) and buried at different depths in a digging pit. I generally recommend using a kiddie wading pool filled halfway with sand as a digging pit, and letting your dog watch you bury the Kongs there. Bury the first one so that 2/3 sticks up, the second so that ½ or 1/3 sticks up, another one just barely covered, etc. Your dog will get the idea! This will help redirect digging behavior to an acceptable location, and the texture of the sand is different enough from the texture of most of the average landscaped yard that most dogs don't mistake other parts of the yard for digging pits very often. Let your dog see you bury the Kongs. Most dogs will be more interested in the digging pit if they think "the big dog" wants to dig there, too!

Hidden Kongs

If you are hiding stuffed Kongs in your house or yard to give your dog something to do while you're gone, start by hiding them in "obvious" places – one in the middle of the yard or room, one in his bed or doghouse, one by the water dish, etc. As your dog learns this game, get trickier about Kong placement. Try hiding them under or behind things (though not anywhere you dog has to destroy something to get the Kong). Hide them at or above standing nose height, say in the branches of a sturdy bush or small tree in the yard, on the couch, or next to the TV. Just be careful not to hide any Kongs on the kitchen counter, the dining room table, or anywhere else people food might be left that you don't want your dog to learn to get into! Have four or more Kongs available for stuffing and hiding.