

Lockdown can be stressful for pets too – here's how to keep your dog entertained

April 8 2020, by Alex Benjamin



Credit: AI-generated image ([disclaimer](#))

Many of us have been adjusting to new routines these past few weeks. Working from home comes with positives, like being nearer the biscuits and working in pajamas. But it also has challenges, like communicating with colleagues and keeping the children entertained.

Like us, many of our [pet dogs](#) are also likely to find this change difficult. And a bustling household and reduced exercise may mean our pups display more problem behaviors than usual—especially [dogs](#) easily overstimulated. But the good news is that while we're adjusting to lockdown life, there are things that can be done to help our dogs feel more comfortable.

Give them a safe space

Firstly, all dogs should have a safe spot in the house to enjoy when they need some quiet time. This could be a spare bedroom, bathroom, or utility room (as long as it is not too hot or cold) or simply a bed in the corner or under a desk.

A crate is also an excellent option for many dogs, and with careful introduction can become their favorite spot. Here, place a bed, some favorite toys, and perhaps a long-lasting chew or some stuffable treat like a [Kong](#).

Make sure they get enough sleep

Adult dogs on average [sleep for between 12 and 16 hours a day](#), and puppies need [even more sleep than that](#). Most dogs will sleep during the day while their families are at work and school, so having us around constantly during lockdown means many dogs aren't getting [the rest they need](#). A quiet spot where they won't be disturbed by video conferences or children will help your dog catch some Zs.



Credit: Chris F from Pexels

Mix-up walkies

For walks, [the current guidance](#) says we can leave the house once a day for exercise. If you live with another adult, you can each take your dog out once. But for many dogs one walk will have to do.

Some dogs benefit from getting their energy out in the morning, while others may prefer a later walk to stave off those [late-night zoomies](#). For non-dog owners, zoomies is when your dog starts running or "zooming" around manically and joyfully for no seemingly discernible reason.

If you can, try varying the time you take your walk to find what works best for you and your dog. You should also plan your route carefully. If

you usually drive somewhere to walk, this is no longer advised so you should plan a route near your home.

Walking routes may be busier than usual with other walkers and cyclists, or runners now unable to visit the gym. If your dog struggles with any of these, planning your route and avoiding popular times is crucial. Your dog may find their new routine more stressful than usual, so be understanding of this.



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Stimulate them mentally

Providing [mental stimulation for your dog](#) is very important right now as it gives them something to do and enriches their lives. It can also help to relieve boredom and unwanted behaviors such as chewing—think puzzle and food toys and [trick-training](#). Through the beauty of [YouTube and social media](#), dog owners can also learn more about [canine enrichment](#) than ever before.

One of the easiest options for mental stimulation is scatter feeding. Simply scattering some of your dog's kibble or some small treats on the floor and letting your dog Hoover them up encourages them to use their nose and makes dinner time more interesting.

Once your dog gets the hang of this you can try it in the grass, or in a [snuffle mat](#). Or go one step further and teach your dog some basic scent work—hide the food and let them sniff it out. This is my dog Cooper's favorite! Longer-lasting chews or fillable toys like Kongs are a great option for helping your dog to wind down as licking and [chewing behaviors promote relaxation](#).

Filling a Kong or similar fillable toy with dog-friendly peanut butter or treats will also help your dog to chill out while on that important call. Freezing fillable toys makes them last longer but build this up slowly to avoid frustration. You should also introduce foods carefully and avoid overfeeding—always ensure the food is dog safe, too.



Credit: Chris F from Pexels



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Be realistic

These are difficult times but being there for our pets will help to make the transition smoother for everyone. But it is also important to be flexible—the change to life in lockdown is tough on all of us, so if your dog regresses in his training, or displays [new undesirable behaviors](#), be patient and prepared to make adjustments and seek guidance from a [force-free trainer](#) if you need help.

Above all else, enjoy this time with your dog. While the world feels so unfamiliar, our pets are working hard to bring us joy. Let them know they are doing a great job!

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