



# Enrichment Ideas for a Less-Able Pet

Low-impact ways to keep the mind busy when the body has to rest

PETSLIKEMINE  
ARTHRITIS & MSK SPACE

When arthritis limits what a pet's body can do, the mind still needs a job. Enrichment keeps them engaged, settled, and content while the joints rest, and a few minutes of sniffing or problem-solving can satisfy a pet as much as a walk. **Tick the ideas you'd like to try, and pick a couple to start with.**

## 1 Scent & searching *nose works while the body rests*

- Scatter feed: toss kibble in the grass or on a towel to sniff out.
- "Find it": hide treats around a room and let them search.
- A snuffle mat to nose through for food.
- A cardboard box with treats wrapped in paper to unwrap.
- Swap a walk for a slow "sniffari", let them set the pace.
- A scent trail dragged along the floor to a hidden reward.

## 2 Puzzles & problem-solving *turn meals into gentle challenges*

- Serve a meal in a puzzle feeder or slow-release toy.
- A treat inside a cardboard tube with the ends folded in.
- A muffin tin with treats under some of the cups.
- A towel rolled up with kibble inside to unroll.
- A lick mat with something soft spread across it.
- A treat hidden under one of a few upturned cups.

## 3 Gentle play & novelty *engagement without the impact*

- A new toy, or rotate old ones so they feel new again.
- Gentle tug at floor level, and let them win.
- A soft toy to carry and parade around.
- Teach a calm, low-impact trick (a nose touch, a chin rest).
- A short trip in the car, just to watch the world go by.
- New textures to investigate, a blanket, a paper bag.

## 4 For cats: hunting at floor level *instincts satisfied without the leap*

- A food puzzle or treat ball to bat along the floor.
- Wand toys kept low, so there's no leaping.
- Let them catch it: end a game with a treat to pounce on.
- Boxes and paper bags to explore and hide in.
- A pinch of catnip or silvewine on a mat.
- A window view of birds or the garden.
- Refresh the space: move a bed, add a box, rotate the toys.

### GOLDEN RULES

**Start easy and build.** Begin with the simplest version, harder only as they get the idea.

**Keep it floor-level.** No jumping, climbing, or twisting, the mind works, the body rests.

**Supervise.** Stay with them, especially around food puzzles and anything chewable.

**Count it in the ration.** Enrichment food is part of the day's allowance, not extra, so it doesn't add weight.

**Follow their lead.** Stop while they're still enjoying it, aim for engagement, not exhaustion.

**How to use.** No need to do all of these, pick a couple that suit your pet and try them this week. A few minutes of sniffing or problem-solving can satisfy a pet as much as a walk, without the strain on sore joints.

**SLOW THE BODY,  
NOT THE LIFE.**