



Get Creative When Feeding Your Pet!



Why shouldn't I feed my pet in a bowl?

The "b" in bowl stands for *boring!* Stop feeding your pet in a bowl and try one of these quick and easy tricks to not only feed your pet but to stimulate their brains at the same time while they work for their food.

Your pet is a living, breathing animal that relies on you for almost everything. She needs you to give her food, water, shelter, play time, potty breaks, and more! Taking care of your pet's physical and mental enrichment is another part of being a pet guardian. Dogs and cats that get enough mental and physical exercise are going to be happier and healthier. Happier and healthier pets are less likely to have behavioral issues down the road.

Enrichment!

Enrichment is adding something to your pet's life that makes it more interesting. The enrichment ideas below only take a few minutes on your end. Plus, they will get your



pet's brain juices flowing while completing an everyday task that is usually mindless—like eating!

Puzzle Feeders



You can buy puzzle feeders at your local pet supply store or on Amazon. You can find them for both dogs and cats. These are great ways to slow your pet down while eating, especially if they are super quick eaters! They must work their noses and tongue around the grooves and dents of the bowl which helps them not inhale their food at first gobble.

Don't have a puzzle feeder? Not to worry! You can also try placing a tennis ball or two in the middle of your dog's food dish, so he is forced to knock the ball around to get the food underneath. He is still working his brains and it is a quick trick to spice up that boring bowl.



Recyclable Enrichment Feeders

Another great option is **reusing materials you can find in your own home!** Things like cereal and snack boxes, egg cartons, a cutting board, or even an old rug will work. All these items can be reused and repurposed to feed your pet and change up their boring old bowl.



Most cats are free feeders when it comes to their dry food and they will just eat when they are hungry without engaging their food. However, when it comes to wet food, that can be a different story. SPCA of NN alumni Xena (pictured above) is a speed eater, so in an effort to try and slow her down her guardian put her can of wet food in an old egg carton. It's a DIY puzzle feeder instead of the pricier version—but it works like a charm all the same!

An egg carton is great for dogs, too. Using dry or wet food, put a tennis ball on top and you've got another little added challenge as your dog has to knock the tennis ball around to get to the kibble underneath.



Rugs for Treats

Have a shaggy old bath rug? It is perfect for feeding your dog his dry food. He will have to stick his nuzzle in all the nooks and crevices of the fabric to locate those tiny little pieces of kibble. What may have taken him 30 seconds before may take him five or more minutes now! This can also be a great game for cats using yummy treats.

Don't have a fluffy rug? Don't fret! You can also feed your dog their dry food by just scattering it across the floor of your garage, backyard, or kitchen. Take that cup of dry food and toss it and watch your dog work to find every drop. With cats, take a couple of your cat's favorite treats and do the same.



To-Do Boxes

Make a to-do box! Your dog will love you forever if you make them one of these. You will need a cardboard box that fits your dog's size, i.e. a small box for a small dog and a big box for a big dog. You can use an Amazon box, cereal box, snack box, or any other box you would otherwise toss out. Fill the box with peanut butter by smearing it on the insides, then throw in their dry food. You can also add some wet food, a hot dog or another meaty treat, and then toss it to your dog!

It is best to feed this to your dog in the garage or in the backyard as it can get messy. It will take your dog time to work through the flaps on the box, eat everything inside, and then lick all the peanut butter off the sides. Not only is it yummy but it is like a "brain game" for them to figure out how to get to all the deliciousness, and much more fun than a boring old bowl. Some might tear the box up, others will knock it around until the food falls out, and some will just stick their muzzles inside and start licking away.

Monitor them while they eat but don't worry if they ingest any cardboard, it can be digested.

Licki Mats



You can buy lick mats at your local pet supply store or on Amazon. There are all kinds of brands and styles. Lick mats are great because they are designed to not only slow your pet down while eating but they have proven to be therapeutic for them as they lick away at the tiny grooves.

For dogs, smear peanut butter on first and then add small treats on the top. For both cats and dogs, smear their wet food on first and then sprinkle treats or kibble on top.



Don't have a lick mat? Try a plastic cutting board, *not* wood! This can be for a meal or a snack. Smear as much peanut butter as you would like all over one side of the board and then sprinkle their dry food or a few treats all over the peanut butter. Then, place the board on the floor and watch your dog enjoy! For an added challenge, hang the cutting



board using the slit at the top on a wall or on a fence so that as your dog eats the cutting board will move and swing. Treats and kibble will fall off and cause your dog to have to use their nose to search and find those missing pieces.

Try it with cats, too! But instead of peanut butter smear your cat's wet food all over the cutting board and maybe add a treat or two so they will have to lick their way through it.



Frisbee Treats

Use an old frisbee! For your dogs, smear peanut butter on the inside of the frisbee and either add some delicious treats on top or your dog's dry food. Why is a frisbee better than a bowl you might ask? Put it down on tile or hardwood and it'll slip and slide as they eat! For an added challenge punch a hole in the top of the frisbee and hang the frisbee from a wall or fence and watch your dog work to get every last lick of peanut butter as it swings.

For cats, smear their wet food all over the inside of the frisbee and place it on hardwood or tile. Sprinkle a few treats on top if you want! Watch them lick away and shift all over the floor as they try and lick every drop.

Don't have a frisbee? Try a Tupperware lid!



***Pro Tip:** For the licki mats, cutting board, and frisbee tricks try putting them in the **freezer** for an hour or two after smearing them with yumminess and *before* giving them to your pet for an added time-consuming challenge.