

How to Stuff a Kong® (or Morrow Bone)

A Kong is a hard rubber, snowman-shaped toy with a small hole on top and a large one on the bottom. A morrow bone (aka shank bone) can be purchased from a butcher or pet shop (they are available raw or smoked). I like bones that are no longer than four inches (Green Valley Meats, Auburn) so the dog can reach it all. A stuffed Kong or similar product, can keep your dog occupied when crated or when you have visitors. It can provide mental stimulation and provide an outlet for your dog's energy. And this wonderful chew toy can go a long way toward alleviating mild separation issues and boredom—just give a stuffed Kong to your dog as you leave, or hide it so he has to find it and then excavate. Be sure to provide stuffed Kongs randomly, not *only* when you leave, so they won't become associated only with your absence. Canines are hunters by nature and in the wild spend most of their time searching for food. How boring their life can be in our modern world. It is no wonder they get into mischief!

Be sure to purchase a Kong that is big enough to stuff. Tiny dogs get a small Kong, but most small dogs get a medium Kong, medium dogs, a large or XL, and large dogs, an XL. There is even a size above XL for very large dogs. Kongs can be stuffed with anything that is safe for your dog to eat. (***Never feed chocolate, onions, grapes, raisins, or spicy foods.***) Just plug the small hole with a chewy treat or peanut butter, flip the Kong over, and stuff! The stuffing should be well-packed so that your dog has to work for it, but not so tightly stuffed that your dog will give up. For inexperienced excavators, make it easy at first by packing loosely and leaving a cookie sticking out of the large hole. I like to use plain whole milk yogurt (Trader Joes, QFC has Nancy's and Fred Meyer natural food department carry this). Yogurt aids digestion which helps avoid gas and loose stools.

To feed your dog's meal in the Kong:

1. Measure out your dog's kibble.
2. Fill the small hole with peanut butter, cheese or a soft dog treat. Flip the Kong upside down.
3. Scoop a teaspoon of canned dog food into the large hole. Then, add a layer of your dog's kibble.
4. Repeat step 3 until you reach the top, ending in a layer of canned food.
5. Pour leftover kibble in a dish and place the stuffed Kong on top.
(This is also helpful for dogs who eat their food too fast, or eat theirs and then try to steal another dog's food.)

Suggestions for frozen Kongs that last even longer... Kongsicles!

- If you have a puppy, moisten his kibble with water, stuff it in the Kong, and freeze it overnight. He'll have a fun, energy-expending breakfast the following morning.
- Try various combinations of canned dog food, a little cream cheese, oatmeal, noodles, rice and mashed potatoes (especially sweet potato) mixed with kibble, apple bits, shredded or puréed carrot, pumpkin, avocado, or banana and freeze.
- Put a dab of peanut butter in the small hole. Turn the Kong upside down in a cup. Fill full of chicken broth, kibble soaked in water, or just water and **freeze**. (Liquid-only frozen Kongsicles recommended for outdoor use.) Alternatively, you can place it on waxed paper or a plate.

If you're in a rush, a fast and easy way to stuff a Kong is to fill it with dog biscuits and hot dog bits. Squeeze the large opening so it elongates, then stuff with hot dog bits and cookies. The cookies should be just big

enough to fit through the elongated hole. If you wish, finish with a bit of peanut butter smeared around the inside of the opening.

Banana Surprise – Plug up the small hole. Then stuff part of a slightly overripe banana (1/2 banana for XL Kong, less for smaller sizes), then a few dog treats or dog cookies, then plain yogurt. Freeze. Dogs love it! Kongs are dishwasher safe or can be soaked in the sink. If you are in a rush to clean it, use a bottle brush.

Stuffed Kong as a training aid, Positive Reinforcement:

- Separation anxiety
- Over excitable with guests, door manners
- Stay on your rug
- Loose leash walking (if it is difficult to fumble for a treat or your dog takes treats too rough on a walk, bring a stuffed kong along.....one lick to reinforce not pulling!
- Crate training
- Dig in your sand box not in the garden
- Eating too fast
- Barking and attention seeking behaviors, destructive chewing

Introduce your dog to new foods slowly and reduce meal size to accommodate the extra calories if your dog is prone to weight gain. A spoonful of cottage cheese or plain yogurt (whole milk or low fat not non fat) really helps dogs with sensitive digestive systems.

My lab never showed any interest in playing with a kong until I started giving him stuffed kongs, now he plays with it for a while after it is empty. I prefer to use the frozen kongs because they are less messy on the carpet and keeps the dog occupied longer. If your dog has never used a kong, only freeze it for an hour or two so it is easy for them to get stuff out his first time.

Experiment and create your own recipes! Check out www.kongcompany.com and click on “kong recipes” for more ideas.... you do NOT need to purchase “ Kong Stuffin’ ”I believe it is healthier to make your own.

One Good Dog! Cowboy’s Frozen Favorite

I like to prepare several empty marrow bones and/or kongs at the same time which saves prep and clean up.

- 1/8 of a Banana (optional, especially good for dogs who get loose stools)
- 7-8 kibble (dry dog food)
- Spoonful plain yogurt or cottage cheese (3-4% milkfat) not nonfat
- 2 spoonfuls canned dog food or enough to fill the bone
- Small spoonful cream cheese, pumpkin or peanut butter smeared around inside (optional)
- 1 or 2 dried liver treats (optional)
- bits of chicken (optional)
- Freeze it for at least an hour (overnight is even better)