

FREWORK HANDOUT

Ace free work is an excellent way to provide our dogs with enrichment, relaxation, and the chance to communicate with us, if we choose to observe them. It's simple to set up.

It looks a little like an open plan obstacle course, and you can set it up just using recycled stuff and items .You can set it up inside – perfect for rainy days! – or outside in the garden, on a walk, in the park .

How to set up a freework activity

You need cut up treats and a water bowl. Its tiring work this sniffing. Spread out your items across a 3 to 5 metre space outside for starters

Suggested equipment

- Use different surfaces: tea towels, a rug, or a large piece of cardboard. Your dog will be walking over these so make sure they're not slippery.
- Have different heights: a box or upturned plastic crate (a plastic crate is preferable as you can smear food on it and clean it easily afterwards).

Engagement Activities: a rolled up tea towel, upturned plant pots, upturned cardboard boxes, snuffle mats or licky mats, cones

Now to the food

Once you've laid out the different elements, add the food.

Place some food directly onto the ground so your dog has the choice of not engaging at all with the different elements if they chooses not to.

Ideally, you would provide both small sized food, such as treats or kibble, as well as wet food that you can smear onto some of the surfaces. If possible, you would also include chewy food and licky items in the free work. E.g smachkos and cream cheese

Now for your dog to explore freely. Give them space to engage with the items and food. Try to avoid telling them what to do. Give gentle verbal praise as they explore the area and find treats. Avoid getting excited. Enjoy watching the relaxed body language and your dog having fun, building confidence and communicating about their preferences.

When observing the dog, think about how they move, what they avoid, how fast they move, do they air scent or track on the ground. Is their anything different about them?