

Enrichment Devices for Primates

Enrichment devices do not need to be complicated to be effective. In fact, some of the best enrichment devices are very simple and inexpensive.

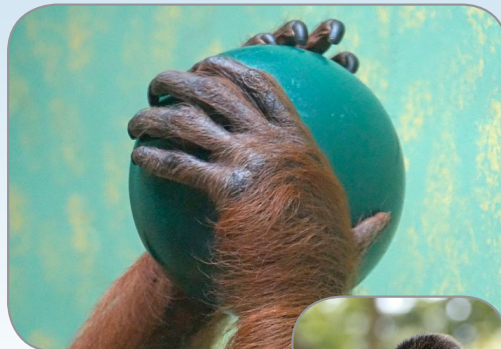


Tools For Supporting Species Typical Activity

Enrichment devices, sometimes called “toys” or “manipulanda,” are one part of a comprehensive enrichment program. See *Supporting Natural Behaviors in Primates Aid* for more information. Enrichment devices are critical to support exploring, playing, and problem-solving behaviors.

Finding the Best Enrichment Devices

A great enrichment device can be almost anything that interests your primate. Some of the best items are born out of creativity, observation, and chance. Offering several items, and paying close attention to how your primates respond, will give you insight into what they find interesting.



Different Primates, Different Enrichment


The best enrichment devices will vary by species. Some explore with their hands, while others explore with their noses. Some enjoy complex enrichment devices, while other species need simple items. And some species are strong and destructive, so they need very sturdy enrichment devices.

Effective enrichment also varies by the individual primate. Each primate is different and finds different things interesting, so the best enrichment for your primates will depend on what they prefer.

DID YOU KNOW?

Devices that primates ignore are not enriching. Regularly changing out enrichment devices helps to keep things interesting.

PRACTICAL TIP

WRITE IT DOWN!  Keeping written records can help you see which strategies are working and which are not. It also helps you quickly spot any risks or other concerns, so you can make sure the enrichment provided is safe.

Here are a few simple ideas that provide effective enrichment:

- **RECYCLED ITEMS**—cardboard boxes or tubes, magazines, broom heads, plastic jugs, construction spools
- **WOOD**—hardwood branches or sticks, browse, discs
- **SENSORY ITEMS**—various textures, scents, colors, and sounds
- **TOYS**—those designed for young children, dogs, or birds may be appropriate for some primates. There are also toys marketed for primates.



Natural Environments

Some facilities offer complex natural environments for their primates. Such environments can support exploration and may not need other enrichment devices as long as there is enough variety to keep primates busy.



This Animal Care Aid is part of a series developed to help with promoting psychological well-being in primates. Topics covered in the series include social grouping, supporting species-typical activities, and special considerations.

Questions? Email us at CenterforAnimalWelfare@usda.gov

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

