

# Enrichment for Your Potbellied Pig

Pigs are naturally social animals with their own kind, so you can enrich your pig's life by getting him or her a piggy friend. Pigs will sleep together, relax together and play with each other. When they play with each other, it's similar to the way dogs interact and play together. Pigs who have other pig companions always have a friend around, even when their people are at work, on vacation or busy with other things.

Since pigs are so smart, they need mental exercise as well as physical exercise. Playing together is a great way for pigs to have mental and physical stimulation at the same time. A pig can do fine without a piggy companion, but he will require much more mental and physical stimulation from his people in order to be truly happy, healthy and well-adjusted.



Even if your pig has a pig friend, it is important to interact with them so that they will not be fearful of humans. Pigs and people can interact in a playful way, but keep in mind that pigs were designed by nature to play with other pigs, so it is possible for your pig to hurt you without intending to do so.

One fun activity for pigs is to train them to wear a harness and take them out on walks. Most pigs love being outdoors exploring new places and smells, and both you and the pigs will receive the added benefit of exercise. Harness and lead training will require time and effort, but the rewards of being out and about with your pig far outweigh the work in the beginning.

Here's how to train your pig to wear a harness: First, put the harness in the pig's enclosure for a week or so, near the place where the pig eats. Then, start putting the harness near the pig. Progress to putting some snacks on the ground and placing the harness over the food. Once the pig begins eating, slip the harness over her head and secure it. Getting the harness on successfully may take several tries. If the pig reacts negatively, allow her to calm down and then try again. It may take a few days to get the pig acclimated to the harness. Once she's comfortable with it, snap a lead on and off you go.

If you have a large, fenced property, it is also possible to train pigs to walk off-lead. It's a good idea to bring a container of almonds when you walk a pig off-lead; if she wanders too far away from you, shake the container and the sound of the nuts rattling around will lure her back.

You can also use snacks to provide enrichment for your pigs. Toss healthy, low-calorie, low-fat snacks (air-popped corn, shredded wheat or plain hay pellets) around for them to find. Fill a dog treat ball or Kong with large sliced veggies and let the pig figure out how

to get the food. Or, dump a bunch of tennis balls in a shallow kiddie pool or big litter box and toss in some healthy snacks. Your pig will have so much fun rooting around for the morsels of food!

*Yvonne McIntosh is the potbellied pig specialist, adoption coordinator and manager for Best Friends Animal Society. If you have questions related to anything piggy, please send an e-mail to [yvonnem@bestfriends.org](mailto:yvonnem@bestfriends.org).*