

PROJECT INSTRUCTIONS

Let's Make Snuffle Mats 🇸🇮!

A fun, creative way to provide shelter dogs with lasting enrichment.

APPROX. TIME

1 to 2 hours / mat

Could be faster

PLANNING NEEDED

Easy

Gather materials in advance

GRADE LEVEL

3rd Grade & Up

Adult help with scissors

BEST FOR

Partners or Groups

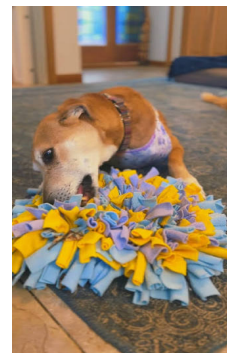
Whole class, scouts, families

ANIMALS HELPED

Primarily Dogs, Some Cats 🐶 🐱

Purpose

Dogs naturally use their noses to explore the world around them. Snuffle mats encourage dogs to sniff, search, and forage for hidden treats, providing important mental stimulation while helping reduce boredom and stress. By creating snuffle mats, students provide shelters and rescues with a reusable enrichment tool that keeps dogs active, engaged, and happier while they wait for their forever homes.



Materials List

- ☐ Rubber anti-fatigue mat with holes (cut to the desired size, about 12 × 12 inches)
- ☐ Fleece fabric (one yard or more, two or more colors recommended)
- ☐ Fabric scissors or sharp scissors
- ☐ Ruler or measuring tape
- ☐ Permanent marker (optional, for marking fleece strips)

Teacher Tip: Recycled fleece blankets, sweatshirts, or fabric remnants can also be used.

Pre-cutting the fleece strips before class can save time, especially with younger students.

Instructions

1. Prepare the Materials

- Cut the anti-fatigue mat to the desired size (about **12 × 12 inches** works well).
- Cut the fleece into strips about **7 inches long** and **1 to 1½ inches wide**.
- You'll need enough strips to fill every hole in the mat.

2. Tie the First Layer

- Choose one color of fleece.
- Thread one fleece strip through two adjacent holes.
- Tie a snug double knot.
- Begin around the outside edge, then work toward the center until all holes are filled.

Teacher Tip: Pull each knot snug so the fleece won't loosen with use.

3. Add the Second Layer

- Turn the mat over.
- Use a second color of fleece.
- Tie snug double knots through the remaining holes from the opposite side of the mat until it looks full and fluffy.
- Check that all knots are secure before trimming any uneven ends.
- Leave the fleece long enough for dogs to sniff through it easily.

Teacher Tip: Mixing colors creates a full, attractive snuffle mat and makes it easier to see which areas have already been filled.

4. Celebrate and Deliver Your Donation!

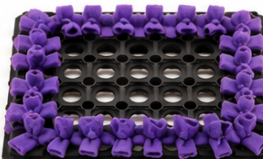
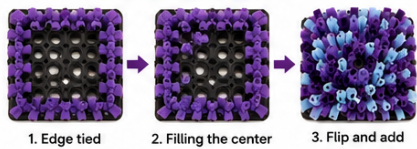
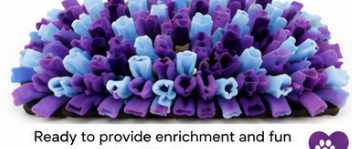
Take a group photo with everyone who participated. Deliver the snuffle mats to your local shelter or rescue and ask how snuffle mats help dogs use their natural sniffing instincts, stay active, reduce boredom, and relieve stress while they wait for adoption. Share what you learned with your class.

See Step-by-Step Visual Guide below!

Step-by-Step Visual Guide

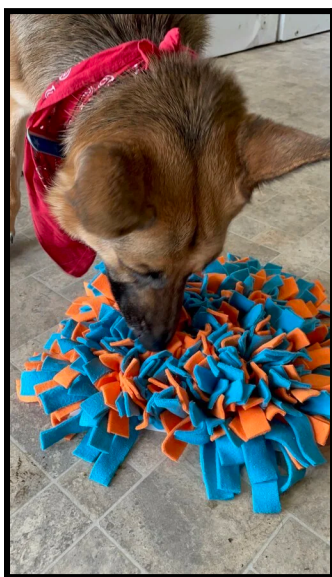
How to Make a Snuffle Mat

Follow these steps to tie fleece strips onto a rubber mat with holes.

1 Cut Fleece into Strips  • Cut fleece into strips about 7 inches long and 1 to 1½ inches wide. • You'll need enough strips to fill every hole in your mat. Teacher Tip: Pre-cutting strips before class saves time!	2 Thread the Strip Through Two Holes  • From the bottom of the mat, push the middle of the strip up through two adjacent holes. • Pull both ends of the strip up and even. Teacher Tip: Always use two adjacent holes.	3 Tie a Tight Double Knot  • Cross the two ends over each other. • Pull the ends through the loop and pull tight to make your first knot. • Tie a second knot with the same ends and pull tight again. Teacher Tip: Pull knots tight so the fleece will stay secure with lots of use.	4 Work Around the Edge, Then Fill the Center  • Continue tying double knots around the outside edge of the mat first. • Then fill in the rest of the mat, working toward the center, until every hole is filled. Teacher Tip: Starting with the edge helps keep the mat neat and makes it easier to fill.	5 Add the Second Layer (Flip and Repeat)  • Flip the mat over. • Use a second color of fleece and tie double knots in the same way. • Check all knots to make sure they are secure. Teacher Tip: Mixing colors makes a fun, full snuffle mat that dogs will love!
SIDE VIEW (CROSS-SECTION)  Top of Mat (knot on top) → Bottom of Mat (fleece comes through holes from underneath) → The strip goes up through two holes from the bottom and is secured with a double knot on the top.		LOOKING FROM THE TOP DURING EACH STEP  1. Edge tied 2. Filling the center 3. Flip and add second layer		FINISHED SNUFFLE MAT  Ready to provide enrichment and fun for shelter dogs! 🐾

REMEMBER: Use tight double knots • Fill every hole • Check knots before donating

Teacher Tip: While snuffle mats are most commonly used for dogs, some rescues also use them for cats.



Standards Connections

Framework	Connection
Common Core ELA	Reading — Students read and follow multi-step directions to create a snuffle mat safely and correctly. Speaking & Listening — Students collaborate to assemble the snuffle mats, solve problems, and discuss how enrichment benefits shelter dogs. Writing — Students create informational materials, labels, or presentations explaining how snuffle mats provide enrichment and improve the well-being of shelter dogs. (<i>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.6.3, RI.7.3, RI.8.3, RI.9–10.3, RI.11–12.3; SL.6.1, SL.7.1, SL.8.1, SL.9–10.1, SL.11–12.1; W.6.2, W.7.2, W.8.2, W.9–10.2, W.11–12.2</i>)
Common Core Math	Measurement — Students measure and cut fleece strips and the anti-fatigue mat to specified dimensions while applying measurement and estimation skills. (<i>CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.3.MD.B.4; 4.MD.A.1; 5.MD.A.1</i>)
SEL Competencies	Social Awareness — Students recognize how enrichment activities improve the physical and emotional well-being of shelter dogs. Responsible Decision-Making — Students safely use materials, follow directions, and create durable enrichment items suitable for shelter use. Relationship Skills — Students work together to measure, cut, tie, and assemble the snuffle mats while sharing responsibilities.
Service Learning	Community needs identified (<i>enrichment items for shelter dogs</i>); students create reusable snuffle mats that encourage natural sniffing behaviors, reduce boredom and stress, and help improve the daily lives of shelter dogs waiting for adoption.

Reflection & Discussion Questions

1. Why is using their sense of smell so important for dogs? How do snuffle mats help keep shelter dogs mentally active and reduce boredom?
2. What challenges did your group face while making the snuffle mats? How did you work together to solve them?
3. How can simple, reusable enrichment items like snuffle mats improve the lives of dogs waiting for adoption?

Extension Ideas

- **Research Canine Enrichment:** Learn more about why dogs need opportunities to sniff, search, and solve simple problems. Find out how animal shelters use enrichment activities to reduce stress and improve dogs' well-being.
- **Design a New Enrichment Toy:** Research other simple enrichment toys that shelters use. Design or sketch another inexpensive toy made from safe, recycled, or easy-to-find materials, and explain how it would benefit shelter dogs.
- **Create an Educational Display:** Design a poster, slideshow, short video, or social media post explaining why enrichment is important for shelter dogs and how snuffle mats help keep them active, engaged, and mentally stimulated while they wait for adoption.
- **Share Your Project:** Document your project with photos and share on social media — tag **@pawsupprojects** and your local shelter.

Did you do this project?

We'd love for you — or an adult — to post your project on Paws Up Projects to inspire others.

pawsupprojects.org/post-your-project