



BEHAVIOR
SERIES

How to Stop Your Dog from Digging

DIG BECAUSE I CAN. It's the motto of dogs everywhere, and completely normal behavior.

Yet the reasons behind the activity are varied. Your dog may dig to seek entertainment, attention, comfort, escape, prey, or protection. (Despite how you might feel sometimes, your dog won't dig out of spite, revenge, or a desire to destroy your yard.) And just when you think you've outsmarted your pooch by finding ways to make the area where he digs unappealing, your dog will likely begin digging in other locations or display other unacceptable behavior, such as chewing or barking.

A more effective approach to the problem is to address the cause of the digging. Here's advice on how to figure out *why* your dog digs—and how to stop it.

Seeking Entertainment

Dogs may dig as a form of self-play when they learn that roots and soil “play back.” Your dog may be digging for entertainment if:

- He's left alone in the yard for long periods of time without opportunities for interaction with you or others.
- His environment is relatively barren—with no playmates or toys.
- He's a puppy or adolescent (under three years old) and doesn't have other outlets for his energy.
- He's the type of dog that is bred to dig as part of his “job” (such as a terrier).

- He's a particularly active type of dog who needs an active job to be happy (such as a herding or sporting breed).
- He's recently seen you “playing” in the dirt (gardening or working in the yard).

Recommendations

Expand your dog's world and increase his “people time” in the following ways:

- Walk your dog at least twice daily. It's good exercise for both of you—mentally and physically!
- Teach your dog to fetch a ball or Frisbee®, and play with him as often as possible.
- Teach your dog a few commands or tricks. Practice these commands/tricks every day for five to 10 minutes.
- Take a training class with your dog and practice daily what you've learned.
- Keep interesting toys in the yard to keep your dog busy even when you're not around. Kong®-type toys filled with treats or busy-box dog toys work especially well. Rotate the toys to make them seem new and interesting.
- For dedicated diggers, provide an “acceptable digging area.” Choose an area of the yard where it's okay for your dog to dig, and cover that area with loose soil or sand. If you catch your dog digging in an unacceptable area, interrupt the behavior with a loud noise and say, “No dig.” Then immediately take the dog to his designated

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