

Digging in Dogs

By Sherry Woodard

Why does my dog dig?

Digging is a natural canine behavior. Dogs dig for many reasons: Some simply enjoy digging; some are looking for a cool spot if it's hot out; some like to bury things to save for later. If your dog is left out in the yard alone for hours, she may be digging holes out of boredom. She may also dig under fencing in order to find an escape route. Some dogs "dig" inside the house in an attempt to create a bed. If your dog scrapes the floor with his paw and circles around, put an old blanket or a square of carpet in that spot to make a bed.



How can I prevent my dog from digging?

Since digging is an enjoyable activity for dogs, it's tough to get a dog to stop. But, you can train your dog to dig in an acceptable spot. Here's how to do it: Pick a place in your yard where a wooden dirt or sand box can be built. (If you can't build a box, you could try a child-size pool.) For a 50-pound dog, the dirt box should be at least 12 inches deep. After you fill the box with dirt or sand, moisten the soil and hide some toys in the box. Provide a variety of treasures for your dog to dig up – new toys, her favorite toys and long-lasting things to chew. Then, encourage your dog to dig in the box. Watch your dog for awhile – if you see her digging anywhere else in the yard, take her back to her dirt box. If you're someone who enjoys playing in the dirt, you might try actually digging with her. Sometimes, you may be what your dog would like to play with!

To minimize digging, make sure your dog's physical and social needs are met. In hot weather, dogs must have shade and clean, cool water to drink. Some dogs enjoy a child-size pool to splash around in. Remember, too, that dogs will dig out of boredom, so make sure your dog gets plenty of exercise and interaction with you on a daily basis. If your dog likes to play with other dogs, try to ensure that he gets the chance to do that. Besides keeping him occupied for a time, playing with other dogs will use up some of his excess energy. In general, when dogs have enough exercise, they are more relaxed and more likely to happily lay around instead of digging in your garden.

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