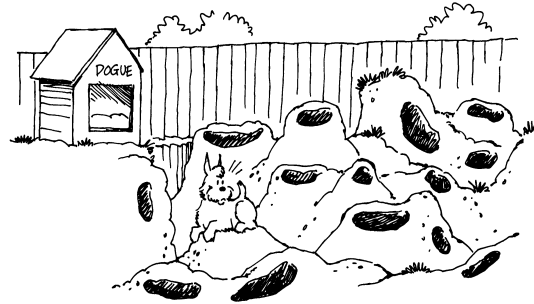


# Digging



Dogs may dig for many different reasons. They could be digging to find prey, real or imagined. They might dig to bury a valuable bone or chew toy with the intention to recover it later. A female dog will often dig to build a den for the arrival of real or imagined puppies. On a hot day, your dog may dig down to cool earth in a shady spot. On a cold day, he may dig to make a warm hole out of the wind. If he is bored, or there is something more interesting outside the yard, your dog may dig to escape, looking for companionship or entertainment. The fact is, for lots of dogs, digging is just plain fun. We may play golf, our dogs dig. If the dog needs to drain his reservoir of energy, digging is probably a better choice than barking. If you absolutely have to stop the digging, be sure to provide another hobby! If he's digging, he's outside. Why? The great majority of dogs are happier inside or at least to be given a choice.



### **MANAGEMENT – What can we do to prevent the situation from occurring?**

Most importantly, make sure that your dog has plenty of mental stimulation (sniffy walks instead of heeling on walks, food puzzles instead eating out of the food bowl, etc). Is your dog spending too much time in the yard on his own? He really should only be out there to use the bathroom, unless he wants to be out there and does not bark at the neighbours and passers-by.

Fence in the flower border, the vegetable garden and other areas that you don't want him to dig in. Dogs like to dig where the ground is soft, which is why they gravitate to those places. You can try putting down chicken wire covered with bark or gravel. No one will know, except the dog, when he tries to dig. Maybe he'll think the entire yard has chicken wire under it and will give up, but you must provide him with another hobby, otherwise he will just dig somewhere else!

### **YIELD – Compromise**

Make him a sandbox where he may dig! Place it in a shady area, perhaps under a tree in the corner of the yard. Replace the top 2-3 feet of soil sand to make digging easier and to reduce dirt in his coat. Dogs like to dig where it is soft, and compared to the black dirt of the garden, the sand brushes off quite easily. Bury a toy as he watches and let him dig it up. When he is indoors, sneak out to bury a surprise treasure. Help him for the next few weeks. Redirect any out-of-bounds digging to the digging pit!

### **TAKE AWAY THE REWARD – What is in it for the dog?**

If the dog is digging to escape, take away the reward by making the yard escape-proof, maybe burying a foot or more of fencing. Consider WHY your dog wants to escape by providing stimulating activities and family life for your dog. Some dogs dig just for something to do. Give your dog something better to do – chewing a stuffed Kong or other chew toy, make regular play dates with nice doggie friends, etc, for more appropriate ways to expend energy.

### **REMOVE THE TRIGGER – What triggers the behaviour?**

Some dogs engage in repetitious digging to relieve stress. What is causing the stress? Stressors must be removed from the dog's life, otherwise there will be other behavioural and emotional consequences. Contact a [veterinary behaviourist](#), [a certified applied animal behaviourist](#), or [a properly qualified canine behaviour consultant](#).

### **NO NASTY STUFF – Punishment can cause undesirable side effects**

If all you do is punish the digging, without resolving the underlying reason, your dog might try a substitute behavior for his spare energy. Do your neighbors prefer digging or barking?

Be aware of, or ask your trainer about, [the serious risks associated with using punishment](#) and why it should be avoided.

