

DIGGING

As with barking, there are many good reasons, from the dog's perspective, to dig holes. Boredom, to get cool, to escape, to bury "treasures", to search for small insects and rodents and a strong breed predisposition (terrier breeds) are the most common ones.



Digging is a normal dog behaviour and in my experience, it is better to channel it in a controlled manner rather than fighting it by adopting such practices as putting chili pepper or dog excrement in the holes or constantly having to replant gardens and lawns, both of which are frustrating and generally not very successful.

The best method I have found is to let the dog have its own digging pit. Small wading pools for toddlers are often seen in council clean ups or can be purchased quite inexpensively at most large chain hardware stores. Fill with sand or dirt and place it in a part of the yard you find acceptable to use as the dogs play area. Encourage the dog to dig in this pit by "seeding" it with



dog biscuits, toys or bones and allow the dog to unearth these treasures on her own. As digging in her pit pays off, she will be more likely to dig here rather than in other less productive areas such as the middle of the lawn. The digging pit has the added benefit of usually being cool and this fulfills another dog digging need.

If the dog is digging under fences etc to escape, then you need another approach entirely. Review the previous suggestions from the barking and running away sections as this type of behavior is often environmentally (boredom) or sexually (frustration) motivated. Unneutered males are the most likely to engage in this type of behavior. Increase the dogs exercise, enrich its environment and consider neutering your pet.

DESTRUCTIVE CHEWING



Puppies begin life exploring the world with their mouths. In puppyhood, they will seek out all manner of objects to gnaw on, both to consume and to soothe teething pain.

To a puppy, there is absolutely no difference in chewing on a \$10 dog toy to a \$200 pair of shoes, so it is in our best interest

to encourage the former rather than the latter!

As with most successful dog training, if we can make good behavior rewarding to the dog we will see the frequency of this behavior increase. The reverse also applies, punishing the dog for unwanted behavior, but it is harder to train successfully and usually more time consuming.

There are a wealth of toys available that we can use to encourage our puppies and dogs to chew without penalty. Food dispensing toys, (get the toughness level appropriate to your breed) are my personal favorites and I recommend having several in the house at all times.

Not only do they assist with chewing problems, but they alleviate boredom, can aid in housetraining and the dogs really seem to enjoy them once they understand how they work.



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Common Behaviour Problems in Dogs



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Start off on the right paw...then do more!

BARKING

Much as it seems difficult for the average owner to understand, dogs bark for many reasons and they make perfect sense to the dog. The main reasons that dogs bark are from boredom, to see off intruders, to get attention and simply because it feels good.



If we can get to the bottom of why our particular dog is barking we will be in a better position to address it. Probably the most common of the aforementioned reasons is that the dog is bored. It is not unusual for some dogs to be left alone in excess of 9 hours every day. Additionally if the dog is not exercised appropriately for its energy requirements then that pent up energy has to go somewhere. Nuisance barkers can be from any breed but some have more of a predisposition to bark than others. Breeds that have watchdog or working ancestry will be more inclined to see off any "Intruders" with a good telling off, much to the annoyance of neighbours. These "intruders" can be birds, possums and other similarly non threatening creatures.

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Dogs that are soliciting attention from their owners will often bark to be let inside, beg for food or company, and hard as it is to believe, even an angry owner's attention is better than none at all. The average owner is unlikely to be

able to wait out the noisy dog, and will eventually succumb, therefore ensuring this strategy will be applied by the dog again in the future.

Some approaches for addressing barking are:

- Ensure your dog is well exercised, particularly before it is to be left alone.

- Provide environmental enrichment, such as chew toys or digging pits to help pass the time.
- Try to avoid letting your dog have access to too much visual stimulus, such as a view through the fence to a road where passer's by are common.
- Make sure your dog is housetrained so he can be left inside if the barking has become an issue with neighbours.



There are also anti-bark tools on the market such as Citronella and electric (shock) collars. While these may upset the sensibilities of some owners, they have been known to be very effective with some dogs in stopping excessive barking.

If the barking occurs when you are home, try teaching the dog to bark on cue. The side benefit of which will be the command to shush which is taught simultaneously.

Barking has a tendency to become more frequent if left unaddressed. Every year it is one of the most common complaints brought to local councils, and the penalties for a nuisance barker can be dire. Worse still is the chance someone will lay a bait for your dog because their patience has run out.

If you have tried all avenues mentioned here, and are still having trouble, seek help from a good dog professional as soon as possible.

RUNNING AWAY AND NOT COMING WHEN CALLED



Some dogs seem hell bent on dashing out v open doors at every opportunity. When off leash in the park, they couldn't care less where their owners are, and if the owner wants to leave before the dog is ready, then a frustrated chase often ensues. If this sounds like your dog, there are a few things to consider .

Firstly, does the dog get sufficient opportunities for exercise outside the house and yard?



Even if the dog is a sedate breed, he will enjoy the stimuli of sights and smells outside his home environment and it is cruel to deny him these opportunities.

Next we need to look at the relationship between dog and owner. Is it friendly or adversarial? A strong bond between owner and dog, based on mutual enjoyment of each other's company, makes for a dog that is happy to stay in the proximity of its owner, even when off leash,

Dogs should be trained to come from an early age, and the steps to achieve this are relatively simple. Every time you call your dog, he must realize that coming to you is always a good thing. Never call him if you don't intend to follow it up, he will just learn to ignore you. Perhaps even more important, is to never call the dog then punish it. If you need to do so, go fetch the dog. Coming when called should always be safe. When you go to the park, practice calling him in, and then let him go play again multiple times. Dogs that are only called when leaving the park will learn to avoid you as the only time you call them immediately precedes the end of play

When first training your dog to come in an unfamiliar or unfenced area, use a long line for safety. Taking the dog off the leash in the street will not only invite a hefty council fine, but runs the risk of having him distracted by a dog or cat across the road which may have very bad consequences should he decide to run. Always train the recall in partnership with a good solid STAY and praise lavishly when he gets it right.

