

Homeward Bound Golden Retriever Rescue

Golden Rule Training

Why Do Dogs Dig?

To stop your dog from digging, you must first understand why he is digging. The most common reasons include:

Many dogs love to dig, it's just plain fun! Some breeds are prone to digging (such as Terriers) and it is part of their genetic makeup; if this is the case, you are better off giving him a place to dig in your yard and train him to only dig in that spot.

Some dogs may be bored, anxious or lonely and digging expends some energy. If your dog is digging under the fence he may be trying to get out exploring or it could be something he smells or it could be fresh dirt that is just screaming for a good dig! Another reason could be he is digging to make a nice cool spot to lie down in and rest, or they could be digging to make a den or shelter.

If the behavior just started, then determine what has changed; is he digging because he smells a new fertilizer? Did a new dog move in next door? Did he see you dig a hole while planting a new rose bush?

Determine the why, and then you can look for a solution.

How to Stop you Dog from Digging

When trying to change any behavior in your dog the golden rule is to be consistent! Once you have determined the reason for the digging, then you can work on a solution.

If they are Bored: Dogs need exercise! Younger (puppies to at least 5 years old) dogs need aerobic exercise, so a leisurely walk in the neighborhood will not be sufficient. A game of fetch, swimming, or maybe a romp in the park with another friendly dog are all good examples of daily exercise.

Exercising your dog both physically and mentally will help keep away any boredom. Try adding mental stimulation such as hide-and-go-seek and other interactive games. A good chew toy will help, such as a Kong with frozen peanut butter (see the article, '*Exercising Your Dog's Brain*' on our website under the *Golden Rule Training Library* for more ideas).

It is instinctual: Ian Dunbar suggests, if your dog insists on digging, consider a digging pit in a specific area for your dog. Dig a hole and bury toys, safe bones, or other favorite toys. If he sees the specific hole as a jackpot of goodies, he will most likely keep digging in the same spot. Your job is to bury toys every night when he can't see that you are the gift fairy.

He needs a cool place to lie down: Many dogs like a plastic kiddie pool to keep cool. There are dog beds that have a cooling system in the mattress, ice cube toys for dogs (toys frozen in ice and the dog spends time trying to get to the toy) or if there is a tile floor they can lie on may help.

They want a den: Some dogs like the safety of a den. You can create one by getting a good sized, wired crate, leave the door open and cover the top and sides with a sheet.

He is anxious: Anxious dogs are prone to digging holes in the yard because they are fearful or nervous. If your dog suffers from separation anxiety, he may just be anxious and the energy has to go somewhere, so the natural act of digging takes over. He may also be looking for attention. If this is the case, you need to work on his anxiety first (*see the article on Separation Anxiety in the Golden Rule Library on our website*).

Other Methods

We do not support any negative punishment, and if you catch him in the act of digging, you can correct him and say, “NO”! Do not punish the dog; just simply redirect him to another game or toy. You could try and bury his feces in the area he is digging, but this is usually ineffective. You can also burry a small balloon in the hole and when he digs, it pops which may deter him from digging in that spot.

Although these are solutions, they may not fix the root cause for digging and the dog will just go dig in another area of the yard. It is best to deal with the underline issue and resolve it.

Sources

<http://www.dog-obedience-training/digging>