



Peninsula Humane Society & SPCA

Destructive Digging

Digging is a natural, enjoyable behavior for your dog. Excessive, destructive digging is most common in bored, isolated, under-exercised dogs, such as a dog that left out in the backyard alone for most of the day. Most dogs need lots of vigorous physical exercise. They need to play with you, run with you, do obedience training with you. If dogs are not releasing their energy in these other ways, they can resort to digging as a way to entertain themselves. Therefore, the first way to help stop a dog from digging is to provide your dog with plenty of mental and physical exercise, as well as bring it inside the house so it can be a part of the family.

In addition to your dog spending more time indoors and receiving more exercise, you must also keep your dog away from any area where digging is not permitted. If you leave your dog alone in the yard, she will continue to dig and be rewarded for it, since digging is a self-rewarding activity.

Just as you give chew toys to a dog who enjoys chewing, you can give a digging-pit to a dog who loves digging! Children's sandboxes work great for this. Fill a sandbox with sand or dirt, and bury a few of your dog's favorite chew toys or rawhides. If you continue to hide new and exciting toys in this pit, your dog won't want to dig anywhere else!

In addition to the above suggestions, you can also use aversives to keep dogs out of areas where you don't want them to dig. Pet stores carry commercial sprays, or you can try sprinkling cayenne pepper on the soil, which can also deter some dogs.

In summary, digging is a natural pastime for your dog, but with proper training you can teach her to dig in an appropriate location, or by providing her with enough exercise and family-time she likely won't have the urge to dig at all!

For more info, call our free Behavior Helpline (650/340-7022 x783 or, for Spanish, x786) or consider a low-cost consultation. To make a consultation appointment, call 650/340-7022 x667. The PHS/SPCA Behavior Department, like many shelter programs, is funded by donations.