



Dogs that Dig

Does your dog dig holes in your yard? Is it driving you crazy? Before you resort to covering the yard in concrete, read this article!



Why do dogs dig?

- **Boredom-** Not enough physical or mental enrichment will cause a dog to find other ways to burn off excess energy. Adding daily exercise and mental stimulation can make you and your dog happier. Frozen stuffed Kongs, short daily training sessions, interactive toy play, toy puzzles, playdates with dogs that your dog enjoys spending time with and training classes are just some examples of activities for your dog.
- **Enjoyment-** Dogs are big advocates of doing what they love! Some dogs just love to play in the dirt! If this is the case, consider creating a “dig box”. By giving your dog an appropriate and enticing place to dig, it will greatly reduce the chance that your dog will dig just anywhere. How to build it? Find either a kiddie pool, sand box or build your own box. The sand, dirt or substrate should be at least 1 foot deep. Use whatever substrate your dog seems to enjoy digging in the most. Hide toys and treats in the dig box. Encourage your

dog to find them. If your dog goes elsewhere to play in the dirt just bring the dog back to the assigned dig spot. Make it a fun and rewarding place to be.

- **Stress relief**- If your dog has had a changes recently or does not seem to be acting like himself, the digging may be a form of stress relief. Try to think about what may be causing the stress and make necessary changes. Consult with a reward based professional trainer or behaviorist if needed.
- **Natural bedding down instincts**- Many dogs show this behavior indoors. Try putting an old blanket, towel or bed down. These replacements can prevent wear and tear on your couch or carpet.
- **Escape**- If your dog seems to be digging as a means of escape, it could be anxiety based or frustration (such as another animal on the other side of the fence). Unaltered animals may have a strong urge to roam. Never leave any animal outside unattended. If your dog is not spayed or neutered, make an appointment with your vet. If you are worried that your dog is experiencing an anxiety issue or has barrier frustration contact our behavior staff for a list of recommended professionals in the area.
- **Peer Pressure**- If your other dog is having a blast playing in the dirt, all of the dogs in the household may join in. Manage the play outside and keep each dog sufficiently entertained. This can mean that you supervise playtime and offer time chill out time when needed.
- **Cool off**- Be careful that your dog is not overheating. Some dogs will dig a hole to cool off. You may need to bring your dog inside before they overheat.



- **To find or hide something**- Some dogs will naturally hide items in the ground or various other places. This is also why a dig box is useful. Dogs also discover things in the yard that we wish they would leave covered. (Such as rabbit poo or other similar items.) This is another reason not to leave your dog unattended. Many bad habits are preventable just by being present.

These tips should help keep you and your dog happy, while keeping your yard hole free. Please contact our behavior department if you have any further questions: behavior@jaxhumane.org

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