

Doggy Ways

Dog Mental & Physical Stimulation

Do you have a very active & energetic dog who needs plenty of mental & physical stimulation throughout the day to help with behaviour such as constant barking, chewing & digging?

Barking:

You can start by accustoming your puppy to a wide variety of people, situations, and sounds in a calm, positive way. Begin obedience training with your dog as soon as you bring him home to establish a clear line of communication and to keep him active and mentally stimulated. Daily exercise will help to burn off energy that might otherwise go into barking.

Give your dog an interactive toy, such as a mental stimulation toy to keep him from barking out of boredom or lack of stimulation.

Barking is sometimes inadvertently reinforced by owners responding to it by yelling at their dogs to be quiet or by calling them into the house. Doing this shows your dog that barking is a means of getting your attention and can encourage nuisance barking.

Dogs bark for many reasons. The more common ones are listed below.

He wants attention:

He may want you to play or get up and feed him. Whatever it is... Don't do it! If you do, you will be teaching him that barking "works" to get his owner moving. Make sure that everything he gets he "earns".

He hears or sees something interesting:

Block the source of sound/sights using a fan or blinds or keeping him in a different area of the house or garden.

On a walk (barking at other dogs, people, or cars, etc out of excitement).

He is afraid, aggressive or territorial.

He is bored or frustrated:

Prevent by keeping him busy and tiring him out with chew toys, exercise and training. He should have at least 30 minutes of aerobic exercise per day, plus 1 hour of chewing and 15 minutes of training.

He is excited to play:

Teach him that when he begins to bark the play ends.

Chewing:

It can be relaxing for them when they are stressed and something to occupy them when they are bored. Since dogs lack hands to enable them to pick up and investigate things around them, they often will use their mouths to inspect something that strikes their curiosity.

Teething, when puppies lose their temporary milk teeth to be replaced with permanent adult teeth, occurs around the ages of three to six months. Chewing, and particularly on cold items, helps to soothe tender gums and mouths during this stage.

Owners sometimes inadvertently reinforce chewing behaviours by paying attention to the offending dog.

Choosing What to Chew:

Preventing inappropriate chewing and supplying your dog with items of his own to chew on from the very beginning can save you much time and money in the long run. Provide your dog with chew toys like a Kong or ball filled with treats or food to keep your dog's mouth happily occupied.

Do not punish your dog for chewing something up after he has done it- this will only confuse him and make it that much harder to get your message across to him. You must catch him in the act to make it a meaningful gesture. Each time you catch him chewing on something he shouldn't, take it away and replace it with one of his chew toys.

In order to keep your dog from acquiring a chewing habit out of boredom, be sure you keep him physically active and mentally stimulated. Go through obedience training with him to ensure a clear line of communication and to keep his mind active. Schedule time each day to take your dog out for exercise.

Digging:

Dogs may get down and dirty because they are in search of a cool spot for a nap, or because they want to bury a tasty treat or a treasured toy for safekeeping. Some dogs, such as terriers, dig because they have been bred to hunt small, burrowing animals, even if the pursuit leads them underground. An unneutered male may dig under a fence to pursue a female in heat, and some females will scratch out primitive nests when they are expecting pups.

These are normal behaviours, and, except in the case of the zealous male, they are not usually a problem.

Excessive hole digging, though, is almost always an outgrowth of boredom or anxiety. Your dog may not be getting the physical activity or mental stimulation he needs, so he digs just to have something to do.

Effecting a Positive Change:

We know that the best way to prevent your dog from digging is to stop him from acquiring the vice in the first place. Obedience training is key to improving communication and enhancing the relationship with your dog. It will help your dog become a welcome and mannerly member of your household instead of being exiled to the yard for bad behaviour, only to engage in more bad behaviour there.

If your dog already has a habit of digging, you must first figure out why he is digging in order to eliminate the behaviour. Most dogs dig out of boredom, so first be sure that your dog is getting plenty of physical activity and mental stimulation. Schedule time every day for training and exercise.

Provide your dog with a variety of toys and hide them around the yard for him to discover on his own. Mental stimulation toys, such as a Kong or ball filled with treats or food are one way to keep your dog happy and stimulated. Hiding several interactive toys around the yard will keep your dog busy for hours.

Because dogs may dig for cooler ground when they are hot, be sure your dog has a comfortable shaded area outside where he can escape the heat of the day without having to dig. Always be careful to leave plenty of fresh water out for your dog too. A water-filled kiddie pool is another way to keep your dog cool and comfortable.

For terriers and other breeds that like to dig, you can provide a sandbox as a designated, acceptable area for digging. Burying treats or toys in the sandbox for your dog to uncover will provide him with an acceptable outlet for his digging urge and keep him occupied.