



DIGGING ISSUES

Digging can be an incredibly destructive behavior that is often caused by boredom, heat, excessive energy and mimicking.

- **Boredom:** Dogs who do not have anything which stimulate them mentally can easily find themselves bored. With their incredible sense of smell and hearing, dogs can hear small creatures like moles and voles under the ground, which may cause them to decide it'd be fun to dig and try to get at those creatures.
- **Heat:** When it gets warm outside, dogs who enjoy the outdoors will often dig a hole in the ground to seek out the moister, cooler dirt to lay in. It is a natural instinct that our canine companions have which help them regulate their body's temperature.
- **Excessive Energy:** Digging is a self-rewarding behavior, which means, your dog finds enjoyment in the activity itself. If your dog has not had enough exercise and mental stimulation, they can choose to dig to entertain themselves and to get rid of their energy.
- **Mimicking:** You dig in your garden, your dog sees you dig in your garden, and if you can do it, why can't your dog do it? They see you doing something, and that can sometimes lead to your dog mimicking your own actions.

Now that we know what is causing your dog to dig in the yard, what can we do about it? This is one situation that requires management. Because your dog gains satisfaction by digging, we cannot train the behavior out of them. Instead, what we need to do is redirect your dog's digging behaviors and manage them.

Training is what we use when we want to get our dogs to do something specific, like fetching a ball, sitting to greet people or walking calmly on a leash. When you need your dog not to do something – especially when you'd like them not to do it in your absence- you need to manage the situation. Management solutions are most successful if they prevent the dog from being rewarded for doing the thing you don't want them to do and they reward your dog for doing something else . This is why for digging, we recommend the following compromise:

- **Build a sandbox for your dog** – this will give your dog a place where they are allowed to dig and they won't ruin your garden. Try to place it in a shady location.
- **Keep the sand moist** – Remember, being too hot is a reason why dog's dig, so by keeping the sand moist, you can give them a nice place where they can lay down and get cool.

- **Bury some toys in the sand** – This will give your dog a motivation to dig in the sandbox instead of your garden. Encouraging your dog to dig in the sandbox with fun toys will make the rest of the yard seem like boring locations for digging.
- **Cover the sandbox at night** – By making sure your dog’s fun spot can be covered up, it will prevent cats or other creatures from using it as a litter box.

If your dog does not seem to be responding to the sandbox:

- Spend time with your dog in the box, give them treats and praise for spending time near or in it.
- Show your dog how to dig, once you show your dog that digging is okay in that location, then that may encourage them to continue in that location
- Have some fun with it! Build some sandcastles and let your dog destroy them, show your dog the toys that are special to the sandbox and play with your dog!

Additionally, you want to supervise your dog in the yard until they learn the rules.

Unsupervised time in the yard results in destructive behavior, which will make it much harder for your dog to learn not to be destructive. Your dog can’t destroy your yard if you’re keeping an eye on them. Make sure your dog has enough exercise and stimulation! A tired dog is a good dog! On top of taking your dog for a walk, or doggy daycare, you can get dog puzzles or play enrichment games with your dog. We have free enrichment game ideas on our website.

TOYS

Here are some toys we recommend for your dog’s sandbox:

- Kong – Stuff a kong with delicious goodies and freeze it. Let your dog enjoy their nice cold Kong in their sandbox, where they can keep cool on a hot day.
- Firehose toys – These are made out of firehose material and are very durable and usually, easy to clean off!
- Yummy treats – Hide treats or chew toys in the sand for your dog to dig up, like cow hooves, deer antlers, trachea treats, or horns. These are all pretty durable, delicious and fun!

TRAINER SUGGESTED SERVICES

- **Doggy Day Care** – Check with your local vet’s office. Doggy Day Care provides your dog a chance to socialize with other dogs and actually enjoy their visit to the vet clinic. Imagine having a dog who is excited about going to the vet instead of terrified! Imagine bringing your dog home after day care and they are exhausted, lazy and happy! I cannot recommend this service enough!