

Preventing Your Dog from Escaping

By Sherry Woodard

Is your dog escaping from the yard? Here are two reasons why this could be happening and some possible solutions to the problem:

Sexual motivation. If your dog is not neutered, he may be escaping to search for female dogs. There's a simple solution: Neuter your dog. (The same holds true for unfixed female dogs, who may be escaping to find male dogs.)

Lack of exercise and interaction. All dogs need exercise and interaction with their pack (that's you). If your dog is spending too many hours out in the yard alone, escaping may be her way of dealing with loneliness and boredom. If you're away from home all day, are there ways that you can break up the long days for her? Perhaps a neighbor could give her a walk halfway through the day or maybe you could arrange to have your dog visit another dog at a friend's home some days while you are away. Other options are putting your dog in doggie daycare or hiring a dog walker. Some dog walkers are seniors or students who don't charge much – they mainly want to enjoy time with a dog.



Here are the various ways that dogs get out and some methods to prevent escape:

Latch-lifting. Some dogs have learned to open gates and let themselves out. Most gates have a latch that can be secured by placing a clip through a hole when the latch is closed. The clip can be a clip from an old leash or a lock. If you need a reminder to use the clip and to get others to use it, put a sign on the gate that says, "Please clip the gate."

Jumping or climbing over the fence. Look for and move objects that the dog may be using as aids. For instance, if the doghouse is close to the fence, he may be launching off the roof. Add additional fencing to add height to your fence. You could try using a light-gauge wire for this purpose; if the dog feels that the light wire is unstable, he may decide that he can no longer jump out. If your dog only climbs out at the corners, you can add fencing across the corners over the top. There's also a product called Coyote Roller (www.coyoteroller.com), rollers that can be installed on the top of fencing to prevent the dog from being able to grip the top of the fence.

Digging under the fence. If digging out is your dog's plan, you will need to either bury fencing in the ground (18 to 24 inches deep) to deter her from digging, or attach fencing to the bottom of your fence and lay it on the ground at least 12 inches into the yard. Both methods work, but you must fix the entire perimeter of the yard or the dog will probably find the unprotected spots.

Dashing out the door. Some dogs escape by dashing out of the house the moment the door opens. For door-dashers, the best strategy is to train the dog to expect a treat whenever the door is opened. Start by placing a baby gate at the doorway. If you have a big dog, you might want to use one that is tall and extra sturdy.

Practice opening the door, stepping over the gate (or walking through it, depending on the style of the gate), and then giving the dog a treat. Soon, your dog will be waiting for a treat rather than dashing out the door.

Next, you can add the command, “Sit.” Luring your dog into a sit is done by holding a treat up, giving the command, waiting until he sits, and then offering the treat. Only give the treat when his rear is on the floor – not before he sits or after he pops up. Practice walking into the house and closing the door behind you, offering the treat only after your dog gives you a sit. When teaching your dog to sit, remember that you don’t need to use a harsh tone. Once he is trained, you can have fun with your happy, well-behaved dog.

Sherry Woodard is the dog training and care consultant at Best Friends. She develops resources and provides consulting services nationally to help achieve Best Friends’ No More Homeless Pets mission.

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