



## Escape Artists

Escaping is a common and dangerous problem for both you and your dog. A loose dog faces many dangers, such as being hit by a car, getting in a fight with a strange dog, or being hurt in a number of other ways. Your loose dog can also be dangerous to other humans or animals he encounters. When you are working with your dog to prevent him from escaping, it is just as important to figure out WHY he is escaping, as HOW.

Some of the most common reasons why your dog may be escaping are as follows:

1. He is feeling bored or lonely.
2. Something in your yard or house is scaring him. It may be something that isn't scary to you, but terrifies your dog.
3. He suffers from separation anxiety and panics when he is left alone.

The following are some tips and explanations to help you work with your dog to learn that home is the best place to be.

### Feeling Bored or Lonely

Dogs are social pack animals and they can become bored and lonely very quickly. If you leave your dog alone for long periods of time in an environment that is dull and has nothing to keep his brain busy, he will most likely attempt to find fun and companionship elsewhere. Super active, energetic, intelligent, or young dogs find these situations especially difficult to deal with.

### Recommendations

- Take your dog for at least one long walk each day in addition to his potty time outside. This means leaving your yard. Walks are great physical and mental exercise for you and your pup.
- Play with your dog. Have a big game of fetch or tug to help wear your dog out both mentally and physically. If your dog doesn't like either of those games, find a game he does enjoy and play it with him often.
- Work on basic commands or more advanced training. Training is a great way to wear out your dog. The mental work he does while learning to follow your commands will wear him out physically as well.
- If you aren't sure how to train your dog, sign up for a doggy training class. They are great ways to help you bond with your dog, and when you get home you can practice all the things you have learned.

- Make sure your dog has lots of interesting toys and treats to keep him interested and entertained while you are out. Food dispensing toys and frozen Kongs stuffed with treats are great ways to keep that brain focused.

## **Scared and Nervous**

Your dog may be escaping in response to something he is afraid of. Things such as very loud noises, construction, or strange animals can be enough to scare your dog out of his yard in search of a safe place to hide.

## **Recommendations**

- The most important thing you need to do is figure out what it is that is scaring your dog. If possible, remove whatever it is from your dog's environment. If it is not possible to do so, you will need to work with him to desensitize him to the thing that is scary to him.
- Leave your dog indoors where he cannot escape while he is unsupervised. Give him a safe place to hide such as a basement or quiet room. Watch your dog while you are home to see if there is a specific place he goes when he is nervous or stressed. Allow him access to that space and encourage him to use that area when he feels insecure.
- For help desensitizing your dog to whatever it is that scares him, connect a Certified Dog Trainer or Behaviorist. Your local veterinarian should be able to help you get in contact with someone who can help you.

## **How Is your Dog Escaping?**

Some dogs will jump or climb the fence in your yard. Other dogs are diggers and try to go under it. Other dogs will chew through gates or fences, learn to open the gate, or many other methods. It is important to identify the how, so you can modify your yard to keep him inside and safe.

## **Recommendations for preventing escape**

- For climbing/jumping dogs: Add an extension to your fence that tilts in toward the yard. The extension doesn't necessarily need to make the fence much higher, as long as it tilts inward at about a 45-degree angle.
- For digging dogs: Bury chicken wire at the base of your fence (with the sharp edges rolled inward), place large rocks at the base, or lay chain-link fencing on the ground.
- For dogs who are escaping by opening latches or chewing through gates, you may need to invest in a different kind of latch or material. Try putting a layer of chain-link around the inside of your wood fence to keep them from chewing out of the fence. Many hardware stores sell latches that are made to be impossible for animals to open.

## **Bolting out the Door**

Some dogs will escape even when you are at home. Dogs often rush or bolt through doors because they inadvertently get rewarded for their escaping behavior. Not only do they get a fun trip outside, but they also get to start an exciting game of chase with their owner. As a result, the more successful escapes a dog makes, the more likely he is to repeat the performance.

It is important to train dogs who bolt out the door to sit and wait until you give them permission to leave the house. To teach him this, start by making him sit before you give him anything he wants. They must sit before they get treats, toys, dinner, pats, etc. Make sure you always ask them to sit before you let them go through a doorway, whether they have a leash on or not. Make sure they stay seated until you give them the go ahead to go outside. If they stand up when you touch the handle, stop and start over again. The same goes for when you turn the knob, open the door a crack, or open it all the way. Anytime that bottom comes off the ground before you give permission, start over again.

## **Last Tips**

1. Never punish your dog after he is already out of the yard. Dogs associate punishment with what they are doing at the time they are punished. Punishing your dog after the fact will not eliminate the escaping behavior, but will only make him afraid to come to you.
2. Never punish your dog if the escaping is a fear-related problem or is due to separation anxiety. Punishing fear-motivated behaviors will only make your dog more afraid, and thus make the problem worse.
3. Chaining your dog should only be used as a last resort, and then only as a temporary measure until a more permanent solution can be found. Chaining your dog does not give him sufficient opportunity for exercise and can be dangerous if done improperly.