



RSPCA School for Dogs Information Sheet

Digging

Puppies and dogs love to dig. Digging is a natural canine behaviour, if you are trying to stop it completely you'll be competing with possibly thousands of years of breeding. Some dogs were bred to dig, the name Terrier, for example, means 'of the earth'.

Here are a few tips to manage your puppy's digging behaviour:

- First of all, establish why your dog is digging. This is the first step to any behaviour management program. There will always be a reason; just to spite you is not the answer!
- Digging is fun! One way to prevent your dog from digging is to give them lots of other things to do instead (see our **Home Alone** and **Entertaining Your Dog** information sheets.)
- Restrict your puppy's access to the undesired digging areas by using some form of barrier, while you teach you puppy where it can dig.
- Provide a new digging area such as a sand pit. Bury lots of exciting rewards in the new area for your puppy to discover. To start with make it easy for them by exposing some of the hidden treasure for your dog to see. Your puppy will be rewarded for digging in the new area, as a result this will become your puppy's favourite place to dig and reduce the number of times your rose garden gets dug up. This will also encourage your pup to use their sandpit to stow away precious booty like bones, Kongs and toys. Try not to uncover this treasure, if you dig it up and take it away your pup will need to find a cleverer hiding place.
- If your dog is digging for bedding and you have already provided them with all the best dog beds that money can buy, it might be easier and cheaper to donate part of your yard to your dog for that purpose.
- If your puppy is constantly digging up bits of concrete and rocks to chew on it may be part of the teething process or a dietary deficiency. Concrete is high in calcium and sulphates which the dog may be craving as they may not be getting enough in their regular diet. Always consult a vet to rule out the dietary issues. For teething pups, be sure they have lots of things to chew on that you don't mind them chewing on (see our **Destructiveness and Chewing** information sheet.)
- Digging in senior dogs, that do not have a history of digging, may be an indication of an underlying medical condition, consult with your vet and bring this to their attention.





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- Rousing on your dog after digging does not teach your dog the right thing to do! It just makes you look unpredictable! All good behaviour change teaches the dog the right behaviour at the same time as making it hard to practice the old one.

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