

MY DOG IS TOO ENERGETIC. WHAT CAN I DO?

Your dog may be bored, lonely or simply not getting enough exercise. Puppies and adolescent dogs under three years of age require more exercise than grown dogs. Some dogs, particularly the herding and sporting breeds, need to be busy to be happy. If your dog seems to have excess energy, follow the suggestions in *What can I do if my dog is bored?*

WHAT IF, DESPITE ALL EFFORTS, MY DOG'S BEHAVIOUR IS TOO DIFFICULT?

Giving up an animal is never easy for the owner or the pet. If, despite your best efforts, your dog's difficult behaviour continues, consult a trainer to discuss new strategies. If that doesn't work, try to find a caring and responsible new home, or surrender your pet to the Ottawa Humane Society. We will do our best to find your former companion the happy, healthy home he deserves.

HOW CAN I STOP MY DOG FROM BARKING SO MUCH?

Excessive barking can be an annoyance for your neighbours as well as your family. Until the problem is resolved, keep your dog indoors when you're out of the house, and let your neighbours know you're working on a solution. Dogs bark for all kinds of reasons. Here are a few tips that could help:

- Ensure that your dog is getting adequate exercise.
- Teach a "quiet" command by allowing one or two barks, then saying "quiet" while shaking a can of coins to distract your dog. While your dog is quiet, offer praise and a treat, a toy or other positive reward.
- If your dog barks at perceived intruders, such as the mail carrier, desensitize your dog by having someone walk by the yard. Offer treats and praise as quiet behaviour continues and the person comes closer.
- Don't confuse your dog by encouraging barking at strangers.
- Have your dog spayed or neutered to reduce territorial barking.
- If you suspect your dog is barking due to separation anxiety, fear or low confidence, consult a dog trainer or behaviourist.
- Consult a dog behaviourist about using a bark collar.

HOW CAN I STOP MY DOG FROM CHEWING?

Puppies commonly chew up to the age of 18 months. Grown dogs chew as a way to explore their world. Rather than eliminating chewing, try to redirect it toward safe, appropriate objects. Keep dangerous objects such as pins, string, tinfoil, cellophane and rubber bands out of your pet's reach. To limit destructive chewing:

- Ensure that your dog is getting adequate exercise and play. If you lack the time to exercise your dog appropriately, his energy will be funnelled destructively.
- Never give a puppy or dog old socks or shoes to chew on.
- Give your puppy a maximum of three safe objects to chew on.
- Until your dog understands the rules, keep tempting items out of his reach. When he is unsupervised, confine him to a safe, dog-proof place with water and toys, such as a crate or the laundry room.
- If you catch your dog in the act, interrupt the chewing with a loud noise and offer an acceptable toy. When your dog takes the toy, offer praise and a treat.
- If you suspect your dog is chewing due to separation anxiety or fear, consult with a reputable animal behaviour specialist or a trainer.

THE CHALLENGING DOG

Dogs can engage in a range of challenging behaviours — including barking, chewing and escaping — but with a little training and plenty of exercise, most difficult behaviours can improve.



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If your dog is engaging in challenging behaviour, try upping exercise and play. Increased activity improves many difficult behaviours.

Training is not only kinder than punishment — it's more effective.



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WHAT IS CONSIDERED CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR IN A DOG?

Much behaviour that is considered challenging or difficult, like barking or chewing, is normal dog behaviour. It's only when such behaviour becomes excessive, or directed toward objects we value, that it can rightly be called difficult.

Challenging dog behaviour includes things like:

- Barking
- Chewing
- Digging
- Jumping
- House soiling
- Stealing (food, objects)
- Escaping



Keep your expectations realistic. Barking and chewing are normal dog behaviours. Aim to limit and redirect, not eliminate.

WHY IS MY DOG DIFFICULT?

Reasons vary, but boredom, isolation and lack of exercise are frequent causes of undesirable behaviour. All dogs need exercise, both mental and physical, to stay healthy and happy. Other common reasons for difficult behaviour are fear or separation anxiety.

WHAT CAN I DO IF MY DOG IS BORED?

- Play with your dog daily — try playing fetch in the back-yard!
- Visit dog-friendly parks to allow your dog to interact and play with other dogs.
- Spend at least a half-hour each day walking your dog. Allow time for sniffing and exploring.
- Increase your dog's mental stimulation every day by teaching commands and tricks.
- Take a dog training course. It will increase bonding and stimulate your dog.
- If your dog is left alone a lot, have a trusted friend, relative or hired dogwalker walk and play with him. Even a half-hour visit in midday will be a welcome diversion.
- Provide your dog with plenty of appropriate toys. When you introduce a new toy, watch carefully to make sure your dog doesn't tear it up and eat the pieces. Try challenging toys, such as nylon bones and Kong™ toys filled with treats, to keep your dog occupied.
- Rotate the toys periodically to keep your dog's interest fresh.

MY DOG'S BEHAVIOUR IS WORSE WHEN HE'S AFRAID. WHAT CAN I DO?

Sometimes dogs engage in challenging behaviour, like barking or chewing, when they are exposed to something they fear, such as loud noises.

If you think your dog is acting out due to fear,

- find out where your dog goes when he's anxious. Allow constant access to that space, or create a similar space your dog can retreat to when he's frightened. Try to limit exposure to the "fear trigger."
- If the fear is excessive, talk to your veterinarian. Your dog may benefit from anti-anxiety medication or the help of a professional trainer.

MY DOG HAS PROBLEMS WHEN I'M AWAY. WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT SEPARATION ANXIETY?

Dogs with separation anxiety have difficulty separating from their primary human. Typically, they will engage in difficult behaviour — such as chewing, scratching or howling — within 20 to 45 minutes after having been left. If your dog has separation anxiety:

- Keep your arrivals and departures low key.
- Leave your dog a reassuring object, such as an old piece of clothing with your scent.
- Develop a safety cue that will let your dog know you'll be coming back. Common cues are playing the radio or television, or providing access to a special toy while you're away.
- Often another dog will help your anxious dog feel more secure; however, if you're contemplating another dog, talk to a behaviour specialist, dog trainer or the Ottawa Humane Society to ensure you find an appropriate match.
- If your dog is extremely anxious, consult your veterinarian. Dogs with severe separation anxiety can harm themselves or their homes and may benefit from pheromone (synthetic hormone) dispensers, drug therapy and the help of a professional trainer.

HOW CAN I CORRECT DESTRUCTIVE BEHAVIOUR?

The appropriate depends on the particular behaviour. However, no matter what sort of difficult behaviour your dog is engaging in,

- ensure that your dog is getting adequate exercise.
- reward positive behaviour with praise and treats.
- don't expect to totally eliminate the behaviour. Try to control, manage or redirect it.
- crate train your dog to create a safe environment for him. Crate training ensures that your dog and your belongings are safe when you're absent.
- never punish a dog unless you catch him in the act. The dog will not understand otherwise, and it may make the problem worse.

HOW CAN I STOP MY DOG FROM ESCAPING?

Make sure your dog gets adequate exercise and is neutered or spayed. If your dog is escaping out of fear or separation anxiety, address the underlying problem. In the meantime, take these precautions to keep your dog from escaping:

- Add an extension to your fence at an inward slant of about 45°. Make sure there is nothing near the fence that could be used as a springboard.
- Block the area around the base of the fence with large rocks or other fencing at ground level. Bury chicken wire at the base, keeping the sharp edges rolled inward to protect your dog from scratches.
- If you decide to tether your dog, be sure to use a leash on an overhead cable runner to prevent entanglement and accidental strangling.