

Escaping

Stop Your Dog from Running Away, Escaping, Roaming & Bolting Out the Door

Dogs running away, roaming, chasing, escaping or not coming back when called are a very common problem for us dog lovers. Although this running away behavior satisfies many of your dog's instincts and is a completely natural thing to do, it is also totally unacceptable and dangerous in today's fast paced world.

Roaming or running away behavior can be a tricky problem to turn around. One of the biggest issues we face when addressing this problem is that each time our dogs get out and explore the world they actually get rewarded for doing so. They get to raid your neighbors rubbish bin, chase the cat from next door or hang out with some other dogs... you get the idea.

That's why running away is often called a "self rewarding behavior". Basically what this means is that once a dog gets into the habit of running away / escaping (and getting rewarded for it) it can be a very difficult behavior to extinguish.

I've put together a 3 step plan that will hopefully put an end to your dog's days of roaming the streets. As with most behavior problems it is preferable to prevent the problem from arising rather than trying to correct an established bad habit.

Here's The 3 Step Plan To Help Stop Your Dog From Running Away:

1. Identify What Causes Your Dog To Run Away.
2. Ensure Your Dog Is Happy, Comfortable, Involved, Safe & Stimulated At Home.
3. Address The Specific Cause or Trigger.

1. Why Do Our Dogs Run Away?

Generally speaking you could say that dogs run away for one of two reasons. They take off in order to get to somewhere or something they want or to get away from something or someone they're not comfortable with.

More specifically you can usually trace your dog's running away behavior back to one or more of the following causes:

Boredom, roaming for a mate, loud noises (such as a thunderstorm or fireworks), separation anxiety, isolation, escaping from mistreatment, lack of obedience training, easy access to "freedom", predatory drive, following a tasty scent, eliciting play, other animals around, psychological problems or inadequate socialization. Plus you've probably got some more that should be added...

As you can see there are many reasons for a dog to run away - don't take it personally.

2. Ensure Your Dog Is Happy, Comfortable, Involved, Safe and Stimulated

The following measures are designed to prevent your dog from ever trying to run away. They are the ingredients which make staying within your yard a more attractive option than taking off. If you implement these measures you can be sure that your dog will be far, far less likely to attempt an escape or run away - even if your dog does make an attempt they probably won't be successful anyway.

In truth the majority of this list could be summed up simply as being the essential elements of "responsible dog ownership".

- Provide comfortable, clean and dry bedding for your dog in a quiet and private area, free from cold drafts. Your dog should also have unrestricted access to clean fresh water and be provided with a suitably well balanced dog food diet.
- Bond closely with your dog through games of fetch, frisbee, long on leash walks and whatever else you enjoy doing together. These activities are great for providing your dog with much needed physical and mental stimulation. This is all part of demonstrating to your dog that he/she is a much loved and valued member of the family.
- Regular visits to the local dog park are a great way to provide your dog with interaction with other dogs.
- Obedience training is the key, it is absolutely essential for any healthy owner-dog relationship. Not only does obedience training provide fantastic stimulation for your dog but also sets you up as the respected and always fair leader in the relationship you share together.
- Some interesting toys scattered around the yard can occupy your dog's mind for many hours. Keep the toys fresh and alternate them each week. Stuffed Kong dog toys are a clear favorite at my house.
- Secure your yard. Make it impossible for your dog to escape - take away the temptation to run away. If your dog likes to dig trenches or is a fence jumper check out this article for some good tips - stop fence jumping.
- Self closing doors and gates are also a good safety measure that can be a worthwhile investment.
- In some cases it can pay to block out the outside stimulus that is causing your dog to run away. An example of this would be to place black plastic sheeting up on your fence to block out your dog's line of sight towards an outside stimulus - such as other dogs or maybe the postman.
- If stray dogs are a problem in your neighborhood call in animal control.

- Dogs that are neutered / spayed are far less likely to run away or roam. If you're not a professional dog breeder then it is always advisable to neuter your puppies.
- If you are away from home for long periods you could employ a dog walker to come in and break up the day for your dog.
- Similar to the point above, you could drop your dog off at the dog minders or a friends place on your way to work to alleviate long boring days of isolation.

3. Address The Specific Cause Of Your Dog's Running Away Behavior

You've seen some general techniques you can put in place to help stop your dog from running away but now it's time to get specific. You know what is causing your dog to escape and you just need to put a stop to it! Ok lets go...

Your Dog Escapes From The Yard:

As we've already discussed, there can be any number of reasons why your dog will escape from the yard. A couple of proven techniques you can put to work straight away are:

- Secure the area by making the yard "escape proof". This article has some great tips - [stop your dog from escaping](#).
- If your dog looks out from the yard and something he/she sees triggers an attempt to escape then you should block out his vision of this object. Black plastic sheeting does the job well in most cases.
- Can you control the area outside your yard? For example, if your dog chases after the postman every time he places a letter in your mail-box would it be possible to put the mail-box out of sight?
- Desensitize your dog to whatever is causing him/her to run away. This method is only appropriate in certain circumstances. This technique basically involves getting your dog used to whatever it is that triggers an escape. Desensitization can be an effective tool in the case of a phobia towards thunderstorms or firecrackers.
- Check out this great article written by a genius clicker dog trainer called Karen Pryor. It outlines the different methods we can employ to modify any problem behavior in our dogs - [the eight ways of changing a dog's behavior](#).

Dog Runs Away When Off Leash & Doesn't Come Back When Called:

The simple answer is obedience training - and plenty of it. Earn the respect of your dog, always be consistent and make coming back to you a better alternative

to your dog than running the other way. Check out this article for step-by-step instruction of the recall command - [please come back to me!](#)

Take Away The Motivation For Escape:

If you know exactly why your dog escapes then take this motivation / reward away. For example if your dog gets out every Monday night when your neighbor puts his rubbish bins out then make sure that the bins are tamper proof. When you extinguish the reward for escaping (the bins) your dog will stop trying after a few unsuccessful attempts.

Does Your Dog Charge Out The Front Door?

Any dog that rushes through an open door is a very dangerous proposition. This behavior must be stopped before disaster strikes. Try these few tips:

- As mentioned earlier a self closing door could be a worthwhile investment.
- Once again obedience training can help with dogs who like to charge through open doors. The "down-stay" and "wait" commands are particularly useful. A dog who is obedience trained will look to you for guidance/leadership before taking a step through the door.
- Set it up so you always go through the door first, before your dog - if you don't go through the door then neither does your dog. Make this a habit.
- Try playing this game at the door. Stand at the door and open it up wide. No doubt your dog will rush toward it in anticipation of an escape. As he gets close to the door swing the door until it is almost closed. This will surprise your dog. If he chooses to sit down and wait you should praise him and toss a tasty treat his way. Continue this process many times until your dog will sit and wait even with the door fully open. When this occurs you then walk out the door and call your dog through.

I'd be lying if I said that getting your dog to stop running away is an easy fix. It is not. The fact that you are fighting against your dog's natural instincts makes this a challenging problem to turn around. The good news though is that if you come up with a good plan from the techniques listed above and apply it with consistency, you will see some improvements before long.