



# Escaping

Escaping is a serious problem for both you and your dog. If your dog is running loose, he is in danger of being hit by a car, attacked by another dog, or getting hurt in a number of other ways. Plus, you're responsible for any damage or injury he causes while loose.

It's important to figure out the **why** as well as the **how** your dog is escaping.

## Loneliness/Boredom

Your dog may be escaping because he's bored and lonely if:

- He is left alone for long periods of time without opportunities for interaction with you.
- His environment is relatively barren, without playmates or toys.
- He is a puppy or adolescent (under three years old) and doesn't have other ways to get rid of his energy.
- He is a particularly active type of dog (like the herding or sporting breeds) who needs an active job in order to be happy.
- The place he goes to when he escapes provides him with interaction and fun things to do. For example, he goes to play with a neighbor's dog or to the local school yard to play with the children.

### Tips

We recommend expanding your dog's world and increasing his "people time" in the following ways:

- Walk your dog daily even if you have a fenced yard. It provides extra exercise as well as stimulation.
- Teach your dog to fetch a ball or Frisbee and practice with him as often as possible.
- Teach your dog a few commands and/or tricks and practice with him as often as possible.
- Take an obedience class with your dog and practice daily what you've learned.
- Provide interesting toys (Kong-type toys filled with treats or busy-box toys) to keep your dog busy when you're not home.
- Rotate your dog's toys to make them seem new and interesting.
- Keep your dog inside when you're unable to supervise him. If you need a crate, contact the Pet Resource Center.
- If you have to be away from home for extended periods of time, take your dog to work with you or to doggie day care, or ask a friend or neighbor to walk your dog.

## Not Spayed/Neutered

Dogs start to become interested in mating with other dogs around 6 months of age. An intact male dog has very high instincts to go look for female dogs. This is called "sexual roaming."

### Tips

We recommend expanding your dog's world and increasing his "people time" in the following ways:

- Get your male dog neutered. Studies show that neutering will decrease "sexual roaming" in about 90% of the cases. If, however, an intact male has established a pattern of escaping, he may continue to do so even after he's neutered, so it's important to have him neutered as soon as possible.
- Get your female dog spayed. If your intact female dog escapes your yard while she's in heat, she'll probably get pregnant and there are too many unwanted dogs already.

## Fear

Your dog may be escaping in response to something he is afraid of if he escapes when he is exposed to loud noises, such as thunderstorms, firecrackers or construction sounds.

### Tips:

- Identify what is frightening your dog and desensitize him to it. You may need professional help with the desensitization process. Check with your veterinarian about giving your dog an anti-anxiety medication while you work on behavior modification.
- Leave your dog indoors when he is likely to encounter the fear stimulus. Mute noise by leaving him in a basement or windowless bathroom and leave on a television, radio or loud fan.
- Provide a “safe place” for your dog. Observe where he likes to go when he feels anxious, then allow access to that space, or create a similar space for him to use when the fear response is triggered.

## Separation Anxiety

Your dog may be escaping due to separation anxiety if:

- He escapes as soon as, or shortly after, you leave.
- He displays other behaviors that reflect a strong attachment to you, such as following you around, frantic greetings or reacting anxiously to your preparations to leave.
- He remains near your home after he’s escaped.

See more information on separation anxiety.

## Preventing Escape

Some dogs jump fences but most actually climb them. A dog can also dig under the fence, chew through it, or learn to open the gate.

**For climbing/jumping dogs:** Add an extension to the top of your fence that tilts in toward the yard at about a 45-degree angle.

**For digging dogs:** Bury chicken wire at the base of your fence, place large rocks at the base, or lay chain-link fencing on the ground.



*Information adapted with permission from Denver Dumb Friends League.*

**Pet Resource Center** *Helping keep pets where they belong - at home.*

7201 Levander Loop Austin, TX 78702 | Email: [pet.resources@austintexas.gov](mailto:pet.resources@austintexas.gov) | Phone: 3-1-1