

Dog Afraid of the Pool

Is there anything we can do to encourage our dog to use the swimming pool?

By September Morn

Q. My friend's 3-year-old Golden Retriever Zoe and my two Goldens are best friends. My question is, what do you do if your dog is terrified of getting into the family pool? I take my dogs to my friend's house and they get into the swimming pool, but Zoe has been afraid of the water since she was a puppy. What can we do to help Zoe?

A. Dogs aren't born knowing how to swim, it's a learned skill, and an unexpected accidental plunge into deep water can be very frightening. Perhaps puppy-Zoe fell into the pool once, but no one saw it happen. That may be where her fear began. But even if she never had a scary experience in the pool, she may simply not like the feeling of being unable to touch the bottom. If that's the problem, try taking her to a shallow lake or bay. There she can walk into the water from shore, going only as deep as feels safe to her, instead of jumping into the pool and having to immediately start swimming.

Not everyone enjoys the same activities. Zoe might like wading better than swimming. Set up a plastic wading pool for her, so she can play and cool off in non-scary, shallow water. Perhaps she'll like that well enough that some day she'll reconsider the big pool.