

Dog Tries to Escape

Keep your dog busy, and he won't try to run off.

By September Morn

Q. I have a German Shorthaired Pointer named Freckles. He loves us, but tends to want to escape from our yard. He can jump over a 5-foot fence. He got out once and was nearly run over. I have tried training him, but he just will not listen to me. I want to keep him, but if I can't train him we will have to give him away. I love him so much but he is a lot to manage.

A. The reason most dogs escape and run off is that the world outside their fence seems more interesting than the confines of their yard. German Shorthairs are active, intelligent dogs, who need plenty of daily physical and mental exercise to keep them busy and happy. That won't happen if he's by himself in the yard; he needs your help and involvement.

Your dog should be getting at least a couple of hours of vigorous physical exercise every day, plus training, games, and other activities that provide mental exercise. If he will fetch a ball or toy, do that with him for a half hour or so each day. Fetch games can be played in the fenced yard or in the house, if you throw soft toys. Daily on-leash walks, for an hour or more outside the fenced yard, will stimulate your dog's mind and help satisfy his curiosity about the "big world," while providing good exercise for you both.

You should also enroll your dog in a reward-based obedience class, to lay groundwork for better attention and cooperation. After graduation from the basic class, go on to more advanced training. Once your dog knows the basics, there are some really fun training activities you might both enjoy: rally, obedience, agility, freestyle, and more. If your dog loves people, including strangers, you might think about training him as a therapy dog, to visit people in nursing homes.

When you give your dog plenty of physical exercise and a daily training session or two to use his mental energy, he will bond closely with you, listen better, and be less bored than he is now. You'll become more interesting to him than the world outside his fence.