

Conquering Fear of Stairs

Why your dog doesn't want to climb the stairs.

Jon Geller, DVM

Q. Our spoiled dog Sandy is a 2-year-old Redtick Coonhound/Beagle mix. We moved into a new home last year and although it took her a while to adjust, she now seems to be quite comfortable in her new surroundings. We have ceramic tiles and hardwood floors on the first floor of our house and last month Sandy refused to go up four ceramic steps that lead to the second floor. She will sit at the bottom of the steps and bark until someone walks her up the steps. Earlier this week she refuses to go down the same steps. This is driving us crazy because she whimpers and barks until we walk up or down the steps with her.

I tried to put a runner on the steps thinking that she may have slipped on them but this didn't help either. Any suggestions as to why she is doing this? Although my husband and I work and we don't have children, Sandy gets a lot of attention from us so I don't think that's the problem.

Needless to say, she is driving us nuts. A. Some dogs have big problems with stairs. Last week, a Toy Poodle came into our emergency hospital that had tumbled head-over-heels down the stairs, and ended up with a broken leg.

Sandy is telling you she is not comfortable going up and down the stairs, especially with the ceramic surface. Continue to escort her up and down the stairs until she can negotiate them without supervision. Consider rewarding her for successfully completing the task.

Look at her travails as a form of inexpensive entertainment, and consider her behavior as evidence when you and your husband ponder the functionality of the canine brain.

Best, Jon Geller, DVM

- Get More Advice From Dr. Geller -