

**Staying Put: Confinement Options and Handling Escape Artists**  
**Karen Peak**  
**West Wind Dog Training**

There are several options for keeping your dog on your property - let us look at them:

*NO CONFINEMENT - RUNNING LOOSE:* Even if you have hundreds of acres, this is the worst possible choice. Your pet can get hopelessly lost, get hit by a car, get in a fight, killed, or at least has the ability to become the neighborhood nuisance. Loose dogs cause thousands of dollars in damage every year to property, livestock, and humans. In many areas, dogs caught chasing livestock or even trespassing on property can be shot on sight. Even the friendliest dog is capable of causing damage regardless of what the owners think. Loose dogs may pack up with others and cause even more damage. Loose dogs can transmit or contract diseases and parasites. From health and safety aspects on all sides, allowing your dog to run loose should never be an option.

*TYING UP:* Sadly, tying up is a popular choice. It is cheaper than fencing and can be done anywhere. However, it also has serious risks. Your dog could get caught up and strangle. Your dog could become tangled and not be able to get to water or shelter. He could get a limb tangled and break it. A dog that hits the end of his rope or chain at a full run could suffer neck injuries. Should another animal or person enter your yard, your dog can only run as far as the tie out allows. Tying allows no protection from other animals and people, especially if your yard is not fenced. A dog tied in a fenced yard could break the tie, get it caught in the fence should he try to jump it and choke. Being tied up can increase aggressive potentials as well as barking and other undesirable behaviors as your dog feels a restraint. Dogs may get used to the feeling of pulling against something making it difficult at times to teach him to walk on a loose lead without pulling.

*ELECTRIC FENCING:* Electric fencing works by burying a wire underground that triggers a special collar on your dog to deliver an electrical shock, sometimes in conjunction with an audible warning, before your dog reaches the hidden boundary. In theory, the dog will learn not to leave the yard and the collar can be removed. The plus side to the electric fence is you do not have a visible fence. The down sides are more. The fence only acts on your dog. It will not prevent strays, wild animals or people from coming on your property. It offers no security. Remember, the fence works in conjunction with a shock collar: no collar, no shock. Some dogs learn to ignore the shock and will continue to leave the property without negative consequences to the dog's behavior. Others with excessively thick coats may not feel the shock (my Sheltie was at a herding clinic and kept bumping an electrical wire for designed to keep large livestock confined. He never felt the shock though the wire was live). Some dogs may bolt through the "fence" and then refuse to return to the property for fear of being shocked. Lastly, no power means you have lost your fence. Should you lose electricity, you also lose your fence.

*BARRIER FENCING:* Depending on the size of your dog and/or his ability to jump will depend on the height of the fence. Six feet is fine for most dogs. Smaller dogs may do well with four foot, but people can reach over it to pat, tease or steal your dog. Fences give the dog freedom to run without feeling physically held and helps prevent other animal and people from entering your property.

Many kennels use chain link fencing. It lasts longer than wood and you can buy prefabricated sections for building a kennel should fencing your entire yard not be an option. (Just make certain you build big enough for your dog to run and provide plenty of other exercise such as walks. A Great Dane in a 12' x 12' run will not get enough room to get running). However, chain link especially if not pulled taught enough along the supports, can be pushed out at the bottom and squeezed under. It also does not prevent neighborhood children from poking sticks through and teasing your dogs. Some dogs will learn to climb the fence like a ladder.

If you like the look of post and rail you can get green vinyl coated wire that blends in to the background to line the fence. This will work with some dogs who are not inclined to jump a four-foot fence or to chew the wire. However, it can be pushed or dug under.

Another fencing option is solid stockade. This allows privacy and you do not have to worry about neighboring children poking at my dogs or sticking little hands through. It cannot be easily pushed out unless rotted. Some dogs may learn to climb the cross pieces like a ladder and it may be dug under. In addition, depending on your climate and whether or not you use treated wood will depend on the longevity of the fence (as well as how much abuse it takes).

*ESCAPE ARTISTS:* Dogs escape for a variety of reasons such as boredom and to find a mate (a prime reason to neuter or spay - it helps reduce this). Never leave your dog in a yard if there will not be someone responsible at home. Should you leave the house at 7 AM and your dog escapes at 7:15 AM, he could be gone all day before you return. If you are not home, your dog should not be outside. (Unattended dogs are also prime for theft and poisoning and torment by nasty children with nothing better to do). Make your dog wants to be in your yard. Make it a fun place to be. You can build low platforms for him to climb on. Tunnels or plastic barrels with the bottoms cut out (either get new or wash extremely well to remove potential toxins) make great places to play hide and seek. Big balls and a wading pool are great ways for your dog to entertain himself. (Warning: wading pools pose a drowning threat to dogs and humans, always supervise water play and empty when through). Some dogs can figure out how to escape from almost anything. Be on your toes and alert.

*Digging:* If your dog digs out of one spot, try putting a large stone, crushed rock or patio block at the spot. Place the stone in the hole and back fill over it. Should you notice him digging under many spots, counter sink wire fencing in a ditch about six to twelve inches deep and twelve inches wide. Lay the wire - try to use vinyl coated, it lasts longer - along the bottom of the ditch and up the fence by at least a foot or to the bottom support of a stockade fence. You can also dog a trench and line it with gravel. If your dog digs

because he really enjoys it, you may wish to make him a spot AWAY from the fence where digging is OK. A 4' x 4' boxed off area with soft dirt that goes down a foot or so can be a place you can teach your dog it is fine to dig to his heart's content. Bear in mind, some breeds such as most of your terriers and Dachshunds were bred to dig into burrows after prey. Digging is part of their heritage. Other dogs dig from boredom, to create a den area or to get to a cool spot in the summer heat.

*Jumping/climbing:* Hopefully, your dog is not climbing a six-foot fence! Should this be the case, you can either purchase or make L-shaped brackets that project inward from the support posts. Line the brackets with wire so you have what looks like a canopy coming out from the main fence. If the dog jumps, he will hit his head. If he tries to climb, he will not be able to get over the barrier. Should you catch your dog trying to climb, or jump out, reinforce the OFF command and get him interested in playing in the yard. If this does not work, try barriers.

*Opening gates:* Some dogs learn to unlatch a variety of gate latches. This can be remedied by always padlocking the gate or changing the type of latch.