

Aversives For Dogs

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Aversives can be used to help decrease an undesirable behavior, but will seldom work effectively unless you also offer an alternative behavior that is more rewarding to the dog. Aversives should be used sparingly and with caution because they may frighten the dog, making him fearful of a place, person or object. What is mildly aversive for one dog may be terrifying to another dog and might have no effect on yet another dog. Experiment cautiously to see what works for your pet.

Texture

You may need to weight the “material” firmly or tape it in order for it to stay put. To protect furniture or floor finish from sticky substances, attach the aversive material to a piece of foil or heavy plastic and secure that with weights or light tape. Texture aversives are more effective for puppies, small dogs and low-confidence dogs than for those who won't let a little obstacle stand in their way.

Indoors

- Shelf paper with the sticky side up
- Double-sided carpet tape

Outdoors

- Irregular/sharp rocks set firmly into dirt
- Chicken wire set firmly into dirt with the sharp edges rolled under

Both

- Heavy plastic carpet runner with the pointed side up

Taste

Some of these substances may damage furniture or floor finishes, so be sure to test them in a hidden location before widespread use. Except for hot sauce and cayenne pepper, these substances should be safe to apply to most people's skin; however, some individuals may be sensitive to them.

- Bitter Apple or similar sprays and gels marketed specifically for taste aversion
- Insect repellents, especially those containing citronella or citrus odors (check for toxicity - if it's safe for young children, it's generally safe for pets too)
- Some hot sauces
- Cayenne pepper
- Some muscle rubs (again check for toxicity if ingestion is possible)
- Citrus odors (colognes, concentrated juices or fresh peels)
- Aloe gel

Surprise!

Remote Controlled Aversives:

- Motion detector that reacts with a startling sound or a spray of water
- Snappy Trainer or upside-down mouse trap that's securely taped under paper to avoid contact
- Aluminum pie plate or cookie sheet containing water, pennies, beans or pebbles - preferably balanced precariously
- Scat Mat (gives a slight static shock)

Human Controlled Aversives:

Use these to interrupt the undesirable behavior and then reward an appropriate alternative behavior.

- Spray bottle or squirt gun filled with water or a combination of water and a little vinegar or citronella oil (NOTE: avoid the super-duper water guns that have a very forceful spray)
- Loud air horn
- Whistle
- Shaker can (soda can containing nails, pennies, beans or pebbles with the opening securely taped shut)
- Air Blaster (such as computer key board cleaner)

WARNING: For fearful dogs, try everything else before using surprise techniques, especially those using noises! Also, remember to start out with the least uncomfortable aversive first and experiment cautiously to see what works for your pet.