



Dogs, Swimming and Pool Safety

You Must Teach Your Dog How to Get Out of Your Pool!!

Most dogs can swim naturally. It's in their genes. Dogs DO NOT AUTOMATICALLY KNOW, however, how to get out of a pool. You have to teach your dog how to get out of your pool in order to prevent him from drowning!



There is a phenomenon called the "doggie death grip" that happens to some dogs when they are in a swimming pool. Whether they entered the pool voluntarily or whether they fell in, if they are not familiar with how to get to the steps and get out on their own, they can end up drowning. What happens is this: a dog goes into the pool (or falls in), tries to find the steps and can't, becomes frightened and swims to the nearest edge. He grabs onto the pool edge with his front paws and tries to use his hind legs to scramble up the side of the pool wall. Large dogs aren't built so they can haul their body weight up over the edge of the pool and get out this way. But the frightened dog keeps trying to do this. And no amount of calling the dog to come to you on the steps will help -- he is too frightened to let go of the edge he's clinging to. Eventually, the dog will grow so exhausted trying to do this that he will drown.

Even a dog who has been in and out of your pool on his own may forget where the steps are! You should take your dog into the pool several times a year and remind him of where the steps are.

Teach Your Dog the Only Place to Enter and Exit the Pool is the Steps

Put a large vertical marker that moves (such as a plant or flag) by the steps so he can easily orient himself. Repeat each of the following stages a hundred times, before going to the next stage. You can reward your dog at each stage by giving him a treat or his favorite toy.

1. Teach him to touch the marker before entering the water.
2. Show him the steps, ramp or ladder from the decking and say, "steps" . . . take him a short distance away and repeat.



3. Gently place him in the water with his feet on the top step. Attach a leash before putting him in the water and stay by the side of the pool. Say "steps" and let him exit. Keep repeating.
4. VERY GRADUALLY increase the distance from the steps and let him swim to the steps to exit.
5. Stay in the shallow end, and keep the lessons short . . . no more than 10 minutes.
6. As your dog becomes more relaxed, gradually move away from the side of the pool and into deeper water. You need to teach him to find the steps, no matter where he is in the water!

To help your dog swim, position your hands so his rear end is up, this will allow him to use all four legs to swim. His neck should extend forward, his head should not point up, and he should look like he is running. Use a food lure, if necessary, to get him in this position.

Never Leave Your Dog Around the Pool Unsupervised!

Safety tips:

1. Have a see-through pool fence with a self-closing and self-locking gate.
2. Have a pool alarm.
3. Have a ramp or ladder at the step for ease of exit.

Never Throw Your Dog in the Water!

It can be traumatic and make him fearful of the water for the rest of his life. Even if your dog is afraid of the water, you should teach him how to get out of the pool at the steps.

Wait at least one hour after eating before allowing dogs to swim in the pool.

Rinse off or give him a shampoo after your session and be sure to dry out his ears. Check his eyes, too, as they may become irritated by the chlorine and need to be rinsed.

Swimming is a physically taxing exercise and dogs can easily become fatigued. Take breaks and watch for signs of exhaustion.

PROVIDE FRESH WATER near the pool. DO NOT ALLOW HIM TO DRINK POOL WATER!!!

Emergency First Aid

If you find your dog motionless in the water, get him out ASAP. If he is not breathing, hold his rear legs up to let water drain out of his lungs. Put him on his side. Clear any debris from his mouth. Close his mouth with your hand and apply mouth-to-nose resuscitation and chest compressions (CPR). Take him to the vet immediately, even if he starts to breathe on his own.