

# Using Visual Barriers with Dogs

By Sherry Woodard

A visual barrier is a solid wall that prevents dogs from seeing what's on the other side (see photo at right). Most often, visual barriers are used so that dogs can't see other dogs, but occasionally they serve to block the dog's view of human neighbors.



There are several reasons why visual barriers might be used:

- To prevent injury to the dog from daily running, jumping and twisting
- To stop a dog from exercising too much, which could result in excessive weight loss
- For safety – to prevent bites from occurring through a fence
- To prevent a dog from being in an anxious, overly excited state

Visual barriers should only be used if other options have been tried without acceptable results. Dogs who are fence-line runners may be doing it partially because they are bored and/or don't get enough exercise. If you help the dog to improve his behavior, you'll enhance his daily quality of life, which doesn't happen if you simply put up a barrier.

So, here are some things to try before you start putting up walls:

- Spend time every day interacting with the dog.
- Shorten the amount of time the dog is out in the yard, so she's not out there for hours.
- Place the dog in a crate for a short period of time and let him calmly enjoy a treat-dispensing toy or a loaded Kong.
- Teach and practice basic commands.
- Teach and practice fun tricks.
- Take the dog for daily walks on lead.



Interacting with a social dog in any of the ways listed above may reduce fence-line running and, at the very least, will help him enjoy a bigger, better life.

If you are part of a rescue group and/or you're fostering the dog, send the dog on outings and sleepovers with other people. If possible, you can also change the dog's space – putting her in a

place with different dogs or neighbors on the other side of the fence.

Another thing to try: Set up path obstacles along the fence line (see bottom photo on page 1). The goal is to help the dog decide to run less on her own. Faced with path obstacles, many dogs decide that fence-line running is not as exciting as it once was.

If aggression at the fence line is the problem, you can attach an additional layer of fencing (creating a double fence) if your dog, or the neighbor's dog, is willing to bite through the fence (see photo at top right). Or, you could set up a freestanding run with no shared fence lines (see photo at right).

Here are a few other things to consider before putting up visual barriers:

- Visual barriers are not allowed everywhere.
- The cost of construction and maintenance could be considerable.
- Some dogs will continue to have the same behavior even with a barrier in place, or develop other undesirable behaviors that then need to be addressed.
- If you have a scenic view from your yard, you'll lose it.

For lots more on how to train dogs and manage their behavior, check out the Behavior and Training section in You & Your Pets on the Best Friends website:

[www.bestfriends.org/theanimals/petcare/dogs.cfm](http://www.bestfriends.org/theanimals/petcare/dogs.cfm)

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**Disclaimer:** Best Friends Animal Society is not responsible for any injuries to anyone using the techniques described in this article. Any person using the techniques described here does so at his/her own risk.

