

Why Dogs Spin Before Lying Down

For a dog owner, watching your dog choose a spot to lie down is often at least as amusing as the morning comics. For some reason, your dog will circle an area two or three times before lying down and sighing with contentment. Why, dog owners wonder, does my dog do that? Does the carpet change so much in the second it takes to circle around?

This behavior appears to be related to the dog's ancestral tendency to dig its own shelter. Owners often describe the ritual of lying down on a carpet similar to that of a wild dog lying down on the grass of the prairie: first, the dog will sniff at his chosen spot, then perhaps dig with front paws, his toenails extended. After some digging the dog will turn several times, lowering his body into a semi-crouch, then "nest" into his imagined hole.



In some cases the dog will turn several times, dig again, turn some more, and repeat the process until asked to lie down by an exasperated owner.

When outside, dogs often dig into cool soil to escape hot weather; by digging and then turning several times they can direct their bodies into the curled posture that will best take advantage of the depression's coolness.

Thus, the turning behavior seen in our homes is most likely derived from the denning behavior of our dogs' wilder relatives. So, like other members of your family, your dog is making himself at home.