



Leaving Home Alone

If your puppy whines and barks if left for any time at all, he needs to be desensitized to being left alone, and not to associate it with upset but with pleasant things – i.e. food! This process needs to happen very slowly, and be built up in tiny steps.

- Start by leaving the room the dog is in and closing the door for just a few seconds before returning. Ignore the dog completely while you do this. Repeat several times over the course of the day, and do it in a variety of rooms in the house, and via the front door. The idea is that there is no time for him to be upset and gradually he will get very bored by the fact you are leaving the room as you are doing it so often and always come straight back.
- Gradually increase the time to being out of the room to a couple of minutes. If he starts to whine, go back in the room but ignore him and next time reduce the time you are out slightly so that he remains quiet. If he is quiet when you go back in, reward him well. Give him lots of opportunities to succeed.
- As you are building up the time, you can give him a distraction toy to play with while you are away – use a Kong toy, stuffed with kibble and something like cream cheese or peanut butter, jammed right in to it, or his dinner in the roll-a-ball toy, a chew or a puzzle toy.
- The puppy will quickly associate your pattern of leaving the house with being left, so try to keep him guessing by mixing up the signals – put on your coat and shoes and then make a cup of tea. Pick up your keys at random intervals. Go out and sit in the car and then come straight back in again.
- Don't make a big fuss when you leave him, give the puppy a Kong etc and walk out the door. If he is well exercised, and toileted he may well settle and sleep sooner than you expect.
- You can use an ipad/ phone app that lets you record sound/ movement in the house whilst you are away so you can see if he is worried and what he is doing. Google search it – there are quite a few apps that do this.

If at all possible, don't leave your puppy alone for any length of time without building it up slowly. Separation anxiety is often caused by puppies being left for long periods too soon, or by being left to 'cry it out' at night. Starting now and starting slowly will give you the best chance of having a dog that is able to cope well with being left, and will make you feel a lot more confident about leaving the dog when you need to.