



Home Alone

The state of your home when you return home at the end of the day speaks volumes about your dog's day. It does not matter if it has been one hour or 10; if you are coming home to chewed water sprinklers, mangled house plants, shredded pillows or complaining neighbors, your dog is trying to tell you something.

Whether you have just brought a new dog or puppy into your home and want to be pro-active to prevent future behavior problems, or if you are living with an existing problem, this Home Alone material should be of some benefit to you in maintaining a happy healthy doggie home life.

What's a Dog to Do?

Most home-related behavior problems are signs of boredom, stress, learned behaviors, or a combination of all three. Either way, all are indicators that it is time to help your dog find more appropriate outlets for his energy or his disquiet when left alone.

If you are experiencing problems with your “home alone” dog, you are not on your own. There are some common problems that can be related to boredom and/or lack of adequate mental or physical stimulation. These problems also top of the list of complaints when people enlist the help of behavior professionals:

- Barking
- Fence Fighting
- Digging
- Chewing/Shredding
- Escaping

- Destruction of property
- Jumping on people when they come home
- Inappropriate elimination

Myths

Before going any further, it is important that we dispel a couple of myths. The first common myth is that dogs do things to “spite” humans. Another is that dogs feel “guilt” when they have done something wrong. Neither perception is true, although it certainly does look and feel that way sometimes. To be an effective dog parent, it is important to recognize that almost all destructive behaviors are nothing more than normal dog behaviors; the problem is that such behaviors simply do not work in human homes.

You may think that your dog “looks guilty” when he has destroyed something, or that the destruction you experience happens only when you leave your dog alone. However, you are most likely seeing the result of *learned behaviors*, or your very smart dog has figured out that it is safe to “have fun” only when you are not around. Either way, it can feel like spite and look like guilt, but in reality your dog's actions and reactions are most likely learned behaviors.

The Truth About How Dogs Learn

Dogs do what works for them in order to get the things they need for pleasure or for survival. Like all living organisms, dogs will also repeat any behavior that results in a reward. Digging a hole in the yard or tearing up an area rug is intrinsically rewarding for most dogs because it is fun; such activities are also perfect boredom-busters for many puppies. Such activities might only be topped on the fun-o-meter by human attention, which many dogs find gratifying, even when *we* think we are punishing the dog for “bad” behaviors.

It is the nature of the “reward” that may render people perplexed. In a dog's mind, humans are of paramount importance. After all, humans provide some of the best things in life including (but not limited to) walks, food, play, toys, companionship, going to the bathroom, and more. Even when angry with your dog, you still remain important to him, even if you yell at him.

Your dog will often interpret yelling or other punishment as attention, since any attention in your dog's behavior mind may be considered “good” as long as it comes from you. This is especially true of dogs that are left alone for long periods

of time with little to do; these dogs are so excited to see their owners that any attention counts as “first-rate” attention to them.

With this in mind, it is also important to understand that it does not make a difference trying to make a dog see what he did “wrong” since dogs do not have morals. Instead, it is far better to figure out what the dog “gets” out of doing the behavior. Essentially, we need to figure out what the dog sees as his “reward” for doing the behavior. It is only when we understand what the dog “gets” that we will be able to prevent the behavior or stop it from happening.

Basically, behaviors are neither good nor bad, but will be repeated if they result in reward or attention. Just because they do not work in a human home does not mean the dog is being “bad” – he must simply learn what is/is not appropriate when sharing living space with humans.

One of the most important lessons is “Be careful what you teach.” Not to apply any undue pressure, but do be aware that every waking moment you spend with your dog, you are teaching him how to behave whether you intend to or not!

What's a Human to Do?

It may seem easy enough to identify potential or current problems, but finding solutions to home alone problems can be a challenge. The steps to preventing and managing such issues may seem hazy until one breaks each problem with matching solution into to a few small steps.

Considering your dog's age is a good start. A young puppy (under 6 months) will require a more comprehensive set of home alone “tools,” while an older, more sedate dog might only need a few extras to provide a comfy, non-eventful daily routine.

You will also want to consider your dog's breed. Working breeds, herding breeds and terriers – all designed to have a strong drive to “work” - may present more of a challenge in terms of energy and the need to keep busy.

However, do not let your dog's non-working breed or advanced maturity level lull you into thinking he does not need much in the way of attention or prevention. Boredom, stress, and the resulting destruction cross all ages and breed types.

The following will provide some fun, proactive ideas on how to keep your dog or puppy out of trouble and occupied with appropriate enrichments when he is left home alone.

Confinement, Supervision, and Training: Dogs need the opportunity to learn what to do before we give them freedom in any environment.

Humane, managed confinement is a great way to be proactive with a new dog or puppy, before the animal has a chance to develop unwanted behaviors when left unsupervised. Managed confinement is also an excellent tool for dogs who are destructive when left home alone. Using managed confinement will help prevent dogs from having access to dangerous situations.

If a dog has freedom without supervision, the dog may learn to do unwanted behaviors. This can be unsafe and unhealthy for the dog, similar to allowing a two-year-old child to roam a house without supervision. It is better to build good habits before the dog learns unwanted behaviors.

Training is very helpful. The handler may work on training exercises to build life skills. These would be skills useful to the dog in any given environment. Examples are settling down on a mat in the house, and learning to chew on appropriate chew toys.

Positive reinforcement training helps build a positive association with the handler in the environment. The handler may use “real life” rewards to strengthen the dog's understanding of certain behaviors.

It is important for the dog to feel comfortable and safe in the environment and around the handler. No punishment or aversive techniques should be used.

Short-Term Confinement

Crates can be used for short-term confinement, but only after your dog has been properly introduced to the concept of being crated. In addition, dogs should never be crated for more than six to eight hours in a row, with the exception of nighttime sleeping.

The other exception is for puppies under 6 months of age. Puppies under six months should not be left in a crate for more than one hour at a stretch for each month of their age. In other words, a three-month-old puppy should not be confined longer than three hours, a four-month-old puppy no more than four hours,

etc. The exception is at night, when most puppies are able to sleep six to eight hours starting around four months old. (Please do not assume that just because a puppy can sleep through the night that he can “hold it” in a crate for the same amount of time during the day. Just as there are different chemicals in place that allow humans to sleep through the night, dogs also have longer periods of bladder and bowel control at night.)

Crates are wonderful tools when used correctly, and when introduced as a comfortable and safe place for your dog to “chill out” or sleep when the world seems overwhelming. When introduced properly, crates also function as a great place to park your dog when you need him to be out from underfoot for a short period of time. However, as with any tool, crates can be used incorrectly and can actually create more problems in the long run when misused.

Whether or not you like the idea of using a crate, it is essential that you consider about introducing a crate at some point in your dog's life, just in case your dog must be confined at some point in time. If your dog does not like using a crate in his home where he is happy and comfortable, he certainly will not be okay being crated should he need to be at the vet's office, at a boarding facility, at a daycare, or when flying on an airplane. In other words, your dog should have some level of comfort in a crate, even if you never intend to use one in your home.

Another common anxiety about crates is that some people feel that they are putting their dogs in “jail.” Used improperly, this may be a reasonably true analogy. However, no one would consider leaving a toddler running loose in a home without supervision, and playpens and cribs are considered indispensable tools for keeping a child safe. Crates should be viewed in the same light, as a way to keep your dog safe and comfortable when you are not there to keep an eye on him.

The type of crate you use will also factor into your dog's acceptance of being crated. There are several new types of crates on the market, including soft-sided crates, but the two most common styles are wire and airline (plastic) crates. Both crate styles have advantages and disadvantages; you will need to determine which best suits your dog.

Wire Crates:

Advantages:

- Can be folded down for easy storage under a bed or in the trunk of a car when traveling.
- Makes the dog feel more like he is part of the room since he can see everything.
- Come with pull-out bottom tray for easy cleaning .
- Allow good air circulation.
- New models have dividers so a large crate can “grow” with a puppy or young dog, thus eliminating the need to purchase several during the dog's growth years .

Disadvantages:

- For dogs overly stimulated by the environment, may allow too much visual contact with the room (may be covered with a blanket, but some dogs will pull the cover inside and shred it).
- Dogs are able to bite on the wires and bottom tray more easily, and may damage or even break teeth.
- Cannot be used on airlines.
- May be easier to escape than airline crates.

Airline Crates:

Advantages:

- Provide visual blockage of the environment for dogs that need less stimulation.
- Are safer if dog is transported in the back of a truck (provides more protection from weather and flying rocks; can be tethered more easily).
- Provide some noise dampening for dogs that are sensitive to sound.
- Only approved method of flying dogs in cargo areas on planes.

Disadvantages:

- Are bulky and difficult to move if crate is for a larger dog.
- Are not collapsible.
- Block out too much of the environment for dogs that worry a lot.

- Do not allow optimal air circulation; must be kept in cool area during summer if house is not climate-controlled.

Crate Considerations:

No matter the style you decide to use, there are a few things you must consider before you start crate training your dog.

First, where to place the crate? Most people use crates where the dog will sleep at night, but it is best to have your dog become accustomed to being crated in many different places in your home.

Second, be sure the crate is always a place of comfort for your dog, by lining it with soft bedding. There are even special beds made to fit perfectly inside crates.

Third, whenever there are lots of distractions around your crated dog, be sure to provide a better distraction inside the crate for your dog. Stuffed Kongs or rawhides are good for this, and will be covered in greater detail further in this handout.

The Crate Game*

How to teach your dog to love going in his crate!

Even if your dog is already using a crate, we encourage you to teach him the “Crate Game,” which is a fun and easy way to have your dog *enjoy* going in his crate. The best part is, he will think that it is all his idea!

The purpose of the Crate Game is for your dog to make the choice to go into his crate. By teaching him that by doing so he will earn a reward. Your dog will also learn that treats only happen *inside* the crate, which makes the crate a great place to be!

How to do it:

- Have ten high-value treats counted out before you start.
- With your dog on leash, place or lure him into the crate.
- Leaving the leash on, shut the crate door.
- Open the crate door, while using your body to block the door, ensuring you're your dog cannot escape.

- Toss a treat to the back of the crate, then close the door again. Be sure your dog sees the treat in your hand as you toss it behind him.
- Repeat this until all ten treats are gone.
- Now stand in front of the crate with your body turned slightly so your shoulder faces a little toward the crate. (Hint: try switching which shoulder is facing the crate if your dog does not seem to catch on right away.)
- Making sure your dog does not escape, open the door as far as you can without your dog charging out. If your dog starts to come out, close the door - do not slam it - to prevent your dog from coming out.
- Once you are able to open the door completely without your dog rushing out, say “Okay,” and motion with an arm sweep for your dog to exit the crate.
- If your dog comes right out, step on or grab his leash and maintain your body posture of facing the crate door with your shoulder turned slightly in.
- It is important to remain quiet, allowing your dog to figure out what you want him to do.
- If your dog does not exit the kennel when you say “Okay,” you will need to turn away and encourage him to come out by clapping your hands, making kissing noises, etc. It is essential that your dog learns that “Okay” means exit. You may have to take a couple of steps away to encourage him to come out. Be sure to step on the leash or take hold of it to prevent your dog from wandering off.
- It is important that you do not reward the exit or say anything! You want your dog to understand that he can come out, but treats only happen in the crate.
- Now wait for up to two minutes, but no longer. Be sure to time this and be silent so your dog can really put all of his concentration into this. The idea is to get your dog to figure out that if he goes in the crate the treats will happen again, but you do not want your dog to get frustrated by a lack of foundation with this exercise. Some dogs get it the first time, and some take a couple of sessions, so be patient.
- If your dog goes back into the crate on his own during the two minutes, continue with “Path A.” If your dog does not go back in during that time, go on to “Path B.”

Path A

- When your dog goes back in the crate, say “Yep” or click and toss a treat to the back of the crate and close the door again.

- Repeat the entry and exit parts until you can start moving away a few steps from the kennel when the door is opened, without your dog trying to exit the crate.
- After your dog readily goes in and out of the crate using “Okay” as his release and your body posture as his cue to enter, it is time to add a “Get in your crate” cue just before your dog starts to enter the crate.
- Start moving back a couple of extra steps when you release your dog from the crate.
- Now when getting ready to put him in his crate, take hold of his collar and hold him back while saying, “Ready, ready, ready...” with lots of excitement. Once you build the excitement level, say “Get in your crate!” and release your dog. Your dog should charge into his crate in anticipation of getting his treat inside! What fun for you and your dog!

Be sure to practice this whole series of steps a number of times before locking your dog in for prolonged periods. It is always better to start with short sessions that build up to longer ones. As you start to add longer times within the crate, you may toss a special bone or chew toy into the back instead of the treat. **Hint:** Your dog should remain in the crate until you say “Okay.” That means no part of his body should cross the threshold of the crate. If your dog scoots or inches forward, be sure to close the door.

Path B

If your dog does not go back in his crate within the two minutes, start at the beginning with luring him into the crate, and do ten treats in the back of the crate again. If your dog is just not getting it, stop and try again later. Only do two sessions of ten treats each, and then take a break. Sometimes just giving your dog some time to think it over will result in success the next time you try.

Hint: You might have to up the ante by using much better treats on this one. Consider using cooked chicken cubes, small chunks of cheese, pieces of hot dog, etc. These should be tiny pieces; no bigger than your pinky fingernail. Make sure your dog is hungry when you start this training. Also make sure you have met your dog's needs by making sure there are no distractions such as other dogs in the room or children that might disturb your dog during the training.

**Modified from trainer Susan Garrett's Crate Game.*

Other Suggestions for the Crate:

Be sure your dog has had some exercise and has relieved himself before starting any training session, and before confining him for any length of time.

Never open the crate door if your dog is whining or barking. If you do, your dog will learn to bark/whine in order to be let out of his crate! If your dog seems distressed and you really feel that he needs something, wait until there is a moment of silence and then quickly open the door while saying "Okay" to release him.

You should first practice with the crate in areas when your dog is able to see you. After a few sessions, when your dog seems comfortable, then you will want to start placing the crate in other areas where he is not able to see you. Only move on to this stage when you have built a strong foundation using the crate game. After lots of practice, you should be able to send your dog to his crate from anywhere in the house, provided you have a way to prop the crate door open. Small bungee cords work well for this!

If you pass the crate and your dog is being quiet, drop some treats inside. This will teach your dog that being quiet in the crate brings rewards!

Be careful not to teach your dog that the crate = you leaving. Use your crate when you are home, as well as when you are going out. If your dog learns that going in his crate means you will soon leave, the crate can quickly become a source of stress for your dog. Practice the Crate Game when you are not going anywhere, and begin by leaving your dog in for longer periods when you are at home.

Settle Down & Go to Your Mat

Too many dogs end up in shelters because they never learn to calm themselves down in the home. Take the time to teach your dog how to be calm when home, and this will help train him to remain calmer throughout the day when you are not home.

With thanks and credit to Andrea Arden, author of Train Your Dog the Lazy Way, and Rosanne Bergman, a terrific dog trainer in San Dimas who modified and tested this exercise to perfection, let's teach your dog to "**Settle Down.**" The goal of this exercise is for your dog to learn to just lie down quietly whenever you sit in a chair and ignore him.

1. Gather everything you will need. This includes a leash and comfortable collar for your dog, and about 50 tiny treats (1/2 inch or less) that your dog particularly likes. Bring a towel or mat for your dog to lie on. You will also need something for YOU to do – a book to read, TV to watch, etc. You may want to put your dog outside, in another room, or in his crate as you prepare for this. Be sure to have the treats in your bait bag or plastic bag – therefore out of sight – so that your dog does not become aroused simply because you have treats. The idea is for your dog to be calm.
2. Bring your dog into the room where you are going to work. Using the leash and collar, go directly to your chair or couch. Sit down with the leash held close – you may hold the leash in your hand, under your foot, or even sit on the leash. Your dog should have just enough leash so that he may stand or lie down with little room for exploring.
3. Ignore your dog.
4. If your dog barks or whines, pretend you do not hear (or care!). If he nuzzles you, move your hand or arm away. If he jumps on you, lean forward or stand up so he drops off without you having to touch him with your hands, look at him, or talk to him. Refuse to acknowledge any attempts to get your attention.
5. While pretending not to pay attention, wait for your dog to become bored enough to lie down. When he does, calmly place a couple treats between his paws so that he eats them off of the floor. Sit up and go back to ignoring him. Is he still lying there? Give a few more treats at unpredictable intervals. Be sure this is a quiet game – you want your dog to rest and be calm, not get excited by adding a “Good Dog” or by petting him. The idea is to get your dog to stay put while being quiet.
6. After about 5 minutes, gather your stuff and move yourself and your dog to another location in the same room. Sit down without talking to your dog and wait again for him to settle down in his new place. Reinforce with treats when he does. Gradually increase the time between treats.
7. When you are tired of this, tell your dog "All Done" in a matter-of-fact tone of voice, and turn him loose.
8. What's great about this exercise is that all dogs can do it! It is simply a matter of setting yourself up for success and waiting out your dog. If your dog likes to chew on the leash, try some Bitter Apple or “Phooey” spray to soak the leash before you start. Or, pick up an extra leash clip and an old choke chain (*not* needed for training!) to make a chain "extension" to your leash. Clip the leash to the chain and use the new clip to hook the chain to the ring on your dog's collar. This adds several inches of "un-chewable" material to your leash.

Settle Down is also a good exercise to use when adding “Go to Your Mat” to the mix. As you begin the Settle Down, use the towel or mat you plan to use around the house. Your dog will start to associate the “Settle Down” with the mat, which then means you may take the mat with you in the car and while working in other places. This will also help your dog make the connection that mat=Settle Down. Once your dog offers to go to his mat when it is placed on the floor, you may add the verbal cue of “Go to Your Mat.” Be sure to really reward the behavior when your dog chooses on his own to go to his mat!

Long-Term Confinement

Long-term confinement is used for dogs that will be left alone more than 6 hours per day without human supervision. Again, it is important that dogs have plenty of comfort but not so much freedom that they are able to become destructive. When deciding *how* to house your dog safely for more than 6 hours, the decision about *where* to house him is first and foremost.

The following are some of the most common areas for long-term housing:

Yards

People most often leave their dogs in yards. Living in Southern California makes this easier in terms of weather, but just because the sun is shining you should not assume that your dog is happy soaking up the rays. It is required by law that your dog have shelter and access to fresh water to maintain physical health, but your dog's mental well-being should also be addressed.

You will need to ensure that your dog is safe in the yard by checking your fencing to insure that there are no gaps through which to escape. You will also want to check for loose boards, cracks or holes in wooden fences. Dogs who can get a head through one of these will usually follow with the body!

If you have a swimming pool or hot tub accessible to your dog, you will need to ensure that your dog knows where the stairs are and how to get out should he jump or fall in.

Small or toy breed dogs should never be left in a yard without protection from wildlife such as hawks or coyotes.

If your dog is excessively vocal when left in the yard, his protests or warnings may earn you a visit from Noise Abatement if a neighbor complains. If your dog has

been known to do a lot of barking, this is his way of communicating that something is not right. Take the time to find out what the problem might be!

Garages

Garages can work well for dogs as long as you take some reasonable precautions. One concern is weather. While garages can be great refuge from inclement weather, they can also become very hot during the warmer months. Remember, garages in general are not cooled, nor are they insulated well. If you have a dog door or the dog can come in and out of a regular door that might be a good way to make sure your dog does not suffer from over heating. You will also want to make sure your dog is not able to get into things like lawn chemicals, laundry soap, or other items often stored in the garage. Be sure to do a thorough scan of the entire area before choosing this option. Also make sure there are no leaks from cars, such as oil or antifreeze, as your dog may roll in or lick up these fluids. Antifreeze is lethal for dogs and will kill in a very short period of time. It is also very appealing to dogs, as it is sweet in taste.

Laundry Rooms

Laundry rooms are another option that may work well for your dog. As a long-term confinement area, the room must be large enough for your dog to stretch out and move around. Of course, you will want to make sure there are no accidents in the making and do a through search for items your dog might find interesting or view as a potential toy. Access from here out to the yard is ideal; many people do put a doggie door in the laundry room leading outside.

Dog Runs

Dog runs are a great way to keep you dog confined and safe when you are not home. Covered runs are best since they may be topped with shade cloth, this keeping your dog in (and in the shade) while keeping other critters out. Make sure to provide a dog house or open crate (either option with bedding of course) to ensure your dog's comfort.

Dog Doors

Providing a dog door is at the top of the list if you trust your dog to be in the house or parts of the house where a door might be located.

Baby Gates

Baby gates are wonderful for confining your dog to a certain section of your home. You may even provide an indoor doggie litter box (or “wee wee” pads) if you are still working on house training. Using baby gates or X-pens to confine your dog to certain areas indoors, while also allowing access outside through a doggie door is another option that allows your dog freedom to relieve himself, but not the freedom to run wild through the entire house.

Dog Rooms

Dog rooms are another option if you know your dog is reliable in the house and can be comfortably left unsupervised in a single room for the amount of time required each day.

Free Roam

Some outstanding dogs may be able to handle having free roam of the house when you are away. It is still a good idea to provide an open crate for those dogs that like to “den,” and to allow access to the outside for potty breaks.

Hint: Wherever you decide to house your dog, invest well in equipment and security. This will pay for itself in the long run!

Pet Proofing for Success

Dogs that have too much time on their paws are likely to go looking for things to do in order to ease boredom. Play it safe and think about how to eliminate things that may inadvertently reward your dog. Get down on your dog's level to see what he sees. It is amazing what the world looks like from your dog's perspective! Things like electrical cords or appliances such as space heaters can be great chew toys to your dog. Make sure you do not allow access to such items by picking them up or preventing contact with them.

The following is a short list of some potential problem areas around the house and the yard. Make sure to do a thorough check to catch any hazards specific to your home!

- Garbage cans: Way too fun and interesting to not investigate! Invest in a heavy metal foot-pedal model, or keep under the sink in a cabinet. (For the latter option, you may need a baby lock to keep the cabinet door closed.)

- Food on counters: Food left out presents a big bonus reward for most dogs. Once the “counter surfing” behavior has been learned, it is nearly impossible to undo since scoring something super high-value is intrinsically rewarding.
- Plants: Both indoor and outdoor plants have the potential to make your dog sick. Make sure you know what you have growing, and eliminate any potentially poisonous ones. Plants also make very fun toys for dogs and they may like to dig them up out of pure joy.
- Garden equipment: Hoses or sprinkler heads are easy targets for dogs that like to chew or dig.
- Pools and hot tubs: Too many dogs drown each year in these! Make sure you limit access to watery areas, or at the very least teach your dog where to find the stairs should he fall in.
- Curtains, shades or blinds: These are very fun play toys! Not only do they present some good textures, some are great noise-makers tug toys as well. In addition to destruction potential, be careful as some smaller dogs can become tangled in pull cords for curtains and blinds.
- Lamps: Lamps are very easy to tip over, either by knocking them over or getting caught in wires and pulling them over.
- Cleaning supplies or chemicals: Be careful! These can be very dangerous for your dog, and you would be surprised what a dog will eat or chew. Make sure to prevent access to products such as this – again, baby locks on cabinets can be a good solution.
- Laundry or clothing: There are very few things as fun for a dog as to have an article of your clothing, covered in your scent, to use as a chew toy! Also applies to stray shoes left lying around!

Thinking Outside the Bowl

What, and how, are you feeding your dog? Addressing these two factors can make a huge difference in how your dog behaves in your absence. Most people do not put much deep thought into feeding their dogs. Pick a brand, buy some food, feed once or twice per day. However, more and more studies indicate that in natural environments, dogs spend much of their day foraging for food. This scavenging goes on for hours each day, keeping dogs far too busy to think about eating pool equipment or table legs!

So, when you feed your dog his daily food allotment in a bowl, which is then gone in a matter of minutes, takes away your dog's food-finding “job.” Fortunately, you can do many different things with food to help your dog spend his time doing what comes naturally, rather than choosing activities that might not be to your liking!

Some Fun Ways to Feed Your Dog:

Buster Cubes and Feeding Balls

Buster Cubes or feeding balls are toys that release bits of kibble as your dog plays with them. These are great food puzzles for your dog, and are also pretty tough so should hold up for many years of play.

Food Hide-and-Seek

“Hide the food” games involve using food carrier toys such as Kongs or hollow bones filled with your dog's food. Hide these items in different locations so he must “hunt” down his kibble or treats.

Grazing in the Grass

Grazing in the grass is just as it sounds! Toss your dog's bowl of dry food out onto the lawn or on a tile floor in the house, then let him scavenge for the pieces. This is an easy thing for humans to do, and dogs love the game! (Caution: if you have more than one dog they may fight over food. Be sure to know your dogs or to test this out before leaving them alone!)

Learn to Earn

Learn to Earn is basically a hand feeding program. You can get your dog engaged in training through hand feeding piece by piece, and he will burn up mental energy just as quickly as he would with exercise. It is hard work to earn each and every kibble, so give your dog a “job” with training and you will both benefit. Your dog will be calmer, and you will have a more well-trained dog!

Water, Water Everywhere

Inside or outside, water sources must be available in most long term confinement locations. If your home is climate controlled your dog will be able to go for longer periods without water when in the house. If your dog displays anxiety behaviors such as panting or pacing when you leave, he will need to have access to more water since stress forces the body to use more fluids. Of course this will also mean he will need to eliminate more as well, and will need access outside or to a designated area for this.

There are many water bowl type; you will need to figure out which ones are best for your dog. Some dogs will need the non-tipping type if they are prone to tossing their bowl around like a toy. Some dogs will dig in the water bowl and may need to have a spigot-style watering tap. These require that your dog lick them to get the water, which ensures a steady supply of water. It is best to shop around and see what best suits your dog's personality.

Exercise

A tired dog is a good dog, but most people do not provide their dogs with nearly enough exercise to ensure calmness for an entire day home alone. Your dog's age is the first thing to consider when forming a good idea of what he needs in terms of physical exercise. Puppies and adolescent dogs (under one year old) will need briefer yet more frequent exercise sessions. This is to ensure that bones and muscles have time to develop correctly, without being overworked. Dogs in these age groups should not be doing activities that include repeated jumping or long bouts of running; these activities must wait until bones and muscles have matured.

Your dog's breed is the next consideration. If you have a working breed, a herding breed, or any dog that was bred to do a “job” you will need to be creative with exercise, and provide both mental and physical activities. A walk around the block is never going to be enough if your dog is fairly young. In fact, an activity that is short-lived might just get your dog more hyped up since he feels he has just “got started” when you end the walk. The problem with these short energy bursts is that you now have a dog with lots of adrenaline and several other chemicals flowing just when you plan on leaving him alone. Now he has to figure out how to dissipate all that get-up-and-go!

Another widely held misconception is that having a large yard constitutes providing exercise for a dog. Dogs rarely exercise themselves when alone in a yard. It is our job to make sure our dogs get the activity they need if we want them to remain calm and quiet dogs while we are away.

Doggie Comfort Zones

Beds, chairs and couches are perennial favorites for home alone dogs; which is fine if you are the sort not to care about your dog being on the furniture. It is almost a given that if you leave, and if you have not limited access to the furniture, he will be on the couch, on a comfy chair, or on the bed in no time! If you do not want your dog resting in these prime places, you will need to limit access by closing

doors, using baby gates, crating, and/or blocking the furniture with a barrier of some sort.

Chewing on appropriate items such as pressed rawhides helps relieve stress and provides exercise (mental and physical) while also keeping your dog's teeth off things he should not chew. There are numerous varieties you can buy that will provide hours of chewing fun. However, you will need to consider your dog's chewing style before leaving him alone with any chew. Dogs that devour a rawhide in just a few moments should not be given most types of chews when left unsupervised. Not only can chew treats give your dog diarrhea if large amounts are ingested quickly, if your dog is able to get large pieces off they may become lodged in your his digestive track if swallowed whole. This is the type of chewer that will need some more creative toys that will hold up to a strong jaw.

Finding appropriate things your dog likes to chew will also help keep your dog chewing the *right* things. If you often say, "There are toys all over the house and my dog never plays with them," then you may not have found the right toys yet. With that in mind, never assume that because a toy looks fun or interesting to you that your dog will feel the same way.

If your dog likes hard surfaces such as furniture legs, you will need to find substances that match that as best as you can. The same goes for dogs that like to shred and tear at soft things like pillows or clothes; you will need to find things that satisfy that texture preference.

Toy Ideas

Save those disembowled stuffed toys that your dog enjoyed just long enough to get the cotton filling out, and use them as casings for food, treats, bones, other toys, balls, or a combination of them all. This will give your dog a familiar toy, but now it will be all full of great things! Old socks can be knotted and stuffed using the same sorts of things.

An old Quaker oatmeal canister, with a couple of holes poked in it and several goodies inside, can make a great "new" toy for dogs that enjoy the feel of paper products in their mouths. Most dogs will tear these up after a time, but who really cares if it keeps important things out of your dog's mouth?

For those dogs that like the hard surfaces, rawhides that have had the crevices filled with little treats or peanut butter or cream cheese make a great long-lasting chew. Nylabones can be smeared with the same sort of treats for a similar purpose.

Of course, Kongs are not just for feeding. Kongs can provide many ways to leave your dog “treasures” to find when you are gone! A well-stuffed Kong can keep a dog busy for quite some time, and he will expend mental and physical energy while he works on it.

Kong Stuffing Recipes

You may find many great Kong “recipes” on the Kong company website:
www.kongcompany.com/default.asp

As you create recipes and experiment with ideas, make sure to be sensitive to your dog's tummy. What follows are some recipes created by veterinarians, dog trainers, and dog lovers worldwide.

🍌 **BANANA RAMA:** 1 fresh banana · 2 tbs wheat germ · 1 tbs plain yogurt (can use your pet's favorite flavor as well) · Kong Toy that best fits your pet's chewing temperament. In a bowl, mash up banana. Then, add wheat germ and yogurt. Mash all ingredients together and use spoon to add to Kong. Freeze for 4 hours. Makes 1 serving for Medium Kong. Double for every Kong Size that is bigger.

🧀 **CHEESY DENTAL KONG DELIGHT:** 3 slices of your pet's favorite cheese · Dental Kong Toy A very simple and creative way to make any pet drool in delight. Just place the 3 slices of cheese directly onto the grooves of your pet's Dental Kong (if model has rope - make sure cheese does not get onto it). Melt in microwave for 20 to 30 seconds. Give to pet after it cools.

🥩 **PHILLY STEAK:** steak scraps · 1 ounce cream cheese · appropriate Kong Toy Place small scraps of the steak inside Kong toy. Spread cream cheese in large hole to hold scraps.

🍏 **FRUIT SALAD:** apple and carrot chunks · 1/4th of a banana · appropriate Kong Toy Place apples and carrots in Kong Toy. Mash the banana in large hole to hold fruit in place. You can include other fruits and veggies: orange slices · peach and/or nectarine chunks · celery sticks · broccoli and/or cauliflower · tomato and black olive mixture.

♥VEGGIE KONG OMELET: 1 egg · your choice of shredded cheese · any vegetables that your pet may like · appropriate Kong Toy Scramble egg and fold in vegetables. Put into Kong toy. Sprinkle some cheese over the top and microwave for about 20 seconds. Cool thoroughly before giving to dog.

♥MAC 'N CHEESE: Leftover macaroni and cheese · small cube of Velveeta · appropriate Kong Toy Melt Velveeta in microwave until gooey. Add mac 'n cheese to Kong Toy. Pour heated Velveeta into Kong. Make sure it has cooled before giving to your pet.

Famous Recipes

♥AUNT JEANNIE'S ARCHEOLOGY KONG (for advanced dogs) LAYER ONE (deepest): roasted, unsalted cashews · freeze dried liver bits LAYER TWO: dog kibble, cookies or liver biscotti · Cheerios · sugar-free, salt-free peanut butter · dried banana chips, apples and apricots LAYER THREE: carrot sticks · turkey or leftover ravioli or tortellini · Kong Toy (the larger the better!) Pack as tightly as possible. The last item inserted should be an apricot or piece of ravioli, presenting a smooth "finish" under the main opening. LIGHT VERSION: substitute crumbled rice cakes for cashews, Caesar croutons for freeze-dried liver, fat free cream cheese for peanut butter. - by Jean Donaldson

♥KONG ON A ROPE: Dry dog kibble · appropriate Kong Toy · Rope Take the rope, pull it through the Kong Toy and knot it. Hang this upside down from a tree, deck or post. The small hole should be facing the ground. Take the kibble and fill the Kong Toy. Make the toy hang just low enough that it is out of your dog's reach. The dog will spend hours trying to retrieve the kibble from the Kong Toy. At the end of the day, take the remaining kibble and give to your pet as a reward. This is advanced work for your dog. - by Ian Dunbar

♥FROZEN JERKY POPS: Peanut butter · bouillon · Jerky Strips · Water · appropriate Kong Toy · muffin tin Smear a small amount of peanut butter over small hole in your Kong Toy. Fill the cool water and add a pinch of bouillon. Place a Jerky Stick inside Kong Toy and freeze. This can also be put (once frozen) in a children's size swimming pool for a fun day of fishing for your pet. - by Terry Ryan



♥SIMPLE, TRIED AND TRUE: Peanut butter · appropriate Kong Toy Smear peanut butter inside the cavity of your Kong Toy. It's that easy! - by trainers and vets worldwide

♥TRIXIE'S FAVORITE: Trixie, a 50 pound Aussie/Springer mix, loves turkey, chicken or marrow bites mixed with slightly moistened food nuggets frozen inside her Kong. She is very clean about un-stuffing - some dogs are not! - by Joe Markham

Every dog has a favorite recipe - finding your dog's will be fun!

REMEMBER: Some foods are not healthy for dogs. When in doubt, check with your vet first.

Kong Hunting

Hide stuffed Kongs indoors and/or out. The hunt is great fun and is also rewarding. Important: provide stuffed Kongs randomly so they will not always be associated with you leaving. Also, if your dog is un-stuffing several Kongs per day, you should appropriately reduce the amount of bowl feeding. Make sure to thoroughly clean Kongs after use; dishwashing is recommended. Your dog's job will last until the Kongs are un-stuffed; you can keep your dog "working" all day if you provide enough stuffed Kongs!

Use Kongs Safely!

Your dog's safety is your responsibility. Always supervise your dog's use of Kongs until you are confident they can be used safely without you being present.

Other considerations to keep your dog happy and calm

Background noise to hide the background noise!

If your dog reacts to outside noises, try using music, the television, or a "Clapper" set to turn on wither music or TV when your dog barks. Having this background noise may distract your dog away from the disturbance, and/or mask the noise that caused the reaction. A recent study on using music to calm dogs found that classical music is best for reducing canine tension and stress.

Just for fun, you can try calling and leaving a message on your own answering machine for your dog to hear.

Other Options

Dog Walkers

Dog walkers are a great way to break up your dog's day if he must be left alone for many extra hours. Just be sure to check references and training techniques before trusting someone with your dog.

Doggie Day Care

Doggie day care is quickly becoming a popular option. One day of good day care is well worth the following two days of a tired dog! Again, be sure to check references and go watch for a couple of hours. It is important to see what happens after the dogs get tired and are less likely to get along. Ask questions such as: Do the dogs get naps? What happens if they get into a fight? And, What is the ratio of staff members to dogs? Always ask for a behind the scenes tour, too!

Lunch Break

Take your lunch break with your dog! Go home for a visit and spend time reinforcing calm behaviors. Go for a walk, or just hang out.

All Work and No Play...

If you are lucky enough to work in a dog-friendly environment, consider taking your dog to work with you. You can use the calmness exercises and the crate training to help your dog be a canine good citizen while in the workplace.

Avoiding Separation Anxiety

- Say goodbyes and hellos as casually as possible. This prevents your comings and goings from being so important to your dog that he panics when he hears the car keys or anticipates you coming home.
- It is best to avoid an all-or-nothing attention routine with your dog. This happens when most of the time you are too busy to pay attention to your dog, but then when you do; it is so over the top that your dog can hardly contain himself! Your dog will never want you to leave if this is the level of attention he receives when you do pay attention to him. It is best to give small, even doses of calm attention to your dog, thus avoiding the all-or-nothing anxiety.

- Exercise is good for lots of things, including helping your dog rest when you are away.
- Vary the routine each day by doing things differently. Pick up your car keys, but do not go anywhere. Then set your keys down again and watch television. Dogs often get worried when our daily routine signals that we are leaving. It is best keep them guessing, and practice leaving for short periods of time so that your dog learns that you do often come back before it becomes a panic-worthy situation.
- Quietly reward all calm behaviors.
- Reward your dog whenever he is not right by your side. This will help him learn that distance from you can also “pay off.” We all love to have our dogs near, but they also need to learn to be away from us; otherwise they have a hard time when their people leave each day. Make it fun and rewarding for your dog. Do the “Go to your mat” game on the other side of the room. Not only is it nice to have your dog out from under foot, but it helps him learn that being away from you pays off!

Comparison checklist for a calm dog verses a destructive dog

The following are profiles of what a calm dog looks like when left alone, what a worried dog looks like, and a checklist for you to see where your dog falls on the scale. Take a few minutes to see if you can improve your dog's life through enrichments and other changes.

Calm Dog Profile

- Reinforcement of all calm behaviors when owner is home.
- Minimum of 30 minutes of physical and mental exercise before you leave the house.
- A good foundation of obedience training that is practiced when you are around the dog.
- Feeding dog with food-carrier toys such as Kongs or Buster Cubes.
- Providing chewing toys like rawhides or shredding toys for dogs to work on while you are gone.
- Interactive play that encourages dog to calm down in order to play again.
- Sleeping well at night- in owner's room on his own bed or in crate.
- Forging games like finding treats in the grass or hiding treat for the dog to find.
- Handling and grooming.

- Massage.
- Really good food.

Destructive Dog Profile

- Little or no exercise (walk around the block is not enough).
- High arousal play with no off switch.
- Not reinforcing calmness.
- Stopping interactive games while dog is still aroused rather than waiting until dog calms down first.
- No obedience training background.
- No chew toys provided.
- Food with lots of carbohydrates.
- All or nothing attention.

Your Dog's Profile

How does your dog stack up? Mark where he falls on a scale of one to five, with one being “Needs Work” and five being “Already There.” This may provide an indicator as to what you may need to work on improving with your dog.

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Feed quality foods | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Dog is not fed in a bowl | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Exercised daily- Aerobics | | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Dog knows all basics obedience | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Dog knows how to settle down | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Dog is not left alone for more than 8 hours without a break | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Dog is provided with special chew toys while alone | | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Dog gets regular massages | | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Dog is crate trained | | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Dog has dog door | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

OTHER: _____

This is just a guide for you to get an idea of where your dog is now, and how you can change some of the things in your dog's daily routine to help him be alone during the day.