

Leaving your dog home alone can be challenging!

Dogs see us as members of their pack, but it's not always possible to spend all of our time with our dogs. The best idea is to teach your furry friend as a puppy, that being home alone is not a big thing; otherwise your dog can develop separation anxiety.

So how do you keep your pup happy when you're not around?

Can you tell how long is too long?

For the well-being of your dog, you should not leave him alone too long. Here are some general recommendations:

Age of the dog	Time for being alone	Reason
Puppies	2 hours a day is the limit.	They are not used to being home alone. They need to pee more and they can develop separation anxiety.
Adult dogs (over 18 months)	Can be left alone four to six hours a day.	These dogs are used to being home alone. They have learned to sleep when you are not home.
Elderly dog	Can be left alone two to six hours.	It depends. Does your elderly dog experience health issues? They may need to pee more etc.

This can happen when your dog is home alone

Dogs that are left home alone may develop bad behaviours such as:

- Scratching
- Biting
- Chewing on furniture and clothes
- Binge eating
- Getting lost
- Howling and barking at random things

Step-by-step guide on training your dog when home alone

Proper training is essential in teaching your dog to be home alone.

Therefore, from the moment you get a dog, start practicing the “Leave & Return” scenario.

Teach your pup that being home alone is absolutely OK and that you will eventually return.

Training can be conducted as following:

- **Step 1:** Put your shoes on and go to the exit. If you notice your dog panicking, try to ignore it, so he gets used to it. Repeat this action at least 3 times every day.
- **Step 2:** As soon as you normally arrive home, avoid giving your dog a warm welcome immediately at the door. Doing this will communicate to your puppy that coming home is a normal happening, not a special event, that he needs to strongly celebrate.
- **Step 3:** After arriving home, command your dog to his bed. After he listens to your command and settles down, welcome him calmly and let him feel your affection.

“When leaving home, if I say goodbye to my dogs, they want to come with me. So I just leave without saying anything and they are ok with it”

2 things to do beforehand leaving your dog alone

When you leave the house for work or leisure without your dog, you should:

1. Avoid giving your dog free rein: Especially in the beginning, try to leave your dog in an area where he is comfortable. Once your dog gets more accustomed to being left alone at home, he can then be on his own without any restriction.
2. Tire out your dog: The best thing you can do before you leave your dog home alone is give him some morning exercise. Start with learning how to walk your dog so that it's beneficial for both you and your dog.

When you take your dog for a morning walk or exercise, it's likely that your dog will pass out asleep right afterwards! This gives you the chance to leave the house without troubles.

Top tricks if your dog is not used to being left alone

Make sure your dog has fun ways to occupy his time.

A good way to keep your dog busy when he's alone can be:

- To use food-dispensing toys instead of the classic food bowl. Some of these toys offer variable difficulty levels so you can make it a long-lasting project and keep your dog active and engaged during the time you're away.
- In general, by leaving your dog small tasks and fun toys to play with when you're not around, you can avoid unwanted boredom behavior (like biting and peeing in inappropriate places). However, never leave your dog alone with a toy that could be chewed apart and swallowed.

How you should behave once you're back

Dedicate some time to your pup and don't be stingy with love and attention. How? Here're just a few suggestions...

- Take your dog out for a walk
- Play fetch in the garden
- Plan a visit to a open space to run free

And remember: Letting your dog stretch his legs after a day spent indoors is a great way to help him burn off some energy.

On the other hand, don't get him accustomed to receiving treats as you walk in. Your dog should know that "Leave & Return" means that there are moments during the day when he could be left alone.