



SEPARATION ANXIETY

Dogs with separation anxiety may bark or howl, be destructive, and urinate and/or defecate in the house when left alone. These behaviors usually occur when the dog is home alone. The destructive behavior tends to be centered around doors and windows because these lead to where the owner left or may be. Dogs often chew doorways and windowsills or pull up carpeting by the front door. Many dogs display signs of separation anxiety shortly after arriving in their new homes but most get over it. Here are some things you can do to help your dog adjust sooner.

Practice short departures. On your dog's first day in your home, start to leave the house for very short times. It's very important to pay no attention to your dog when you do the departures. First, just go in and out the door. If your dog doesn't panic, take the trash outside or pick up the mail. Then, leave the house for five-minute intervals. Then try ten minutes. If you take your car to work, make sure you drive your car away. Over the first two days, try to progress up to 30 minutes. Make sure you allow your dog to relax between departures. If your dog panics, slow down! Wait a couple of hours before doing another departure and make it short. The goal is to have your dog relax when left alone. If you are patient and don't go faster than your dog can tolerate, both of you will be happier.

- Ignore your dog when you come and go. Making too big a deal of your departures will teach your dog to make a big deal of departures. Ignore your dog when leaving and don't have a party when you get back.
- Don't let your dog be a Velcro dog. Discourage allowing your dog to follow you everywhere. Staying in another room will help your dog learn that being alone is not dangerous. Don't allow your dog to sit next to you all the time. Resting and sleeping while not touching will help your dog feel more confident when alone.
- Give your dog a delicious and long-lasting chew before you leave. Although many anxious dogs won't eat when left alone, some will, and when they do, their anxiety is reduced. Leaving a very delicious chew may be something a dog just can't refuse! Try a Kong toy or hollow marrow bone filled with cheese spread, peanut butter, or treats. Only give this toy before you leave. Pick it up when you come home.
- Use the "Say Please" program. This is a program to teach your dog to politely ask for things before they are given. This is an easy way to become your dog's gentle leader and to decrease your dog's "Velcro" tendencies. All you do is ask your dog to sit before you do anything for him or her and give praise after he or she sits. For instance: sit before being pet, sit before being greeted, sit before putting a leash on, sit before opening the door, sit before putting the food bowl down, sit before giving a treat, sit before throwing a ball, sit before getting in the car.

Some dogs do better alone in a crate; others are more comfortable in a more open area in the house.