



Familiarising your puppy to being alone

Most puppies will initially become distressed when they are left alone. However, this is something they need to gradually learn to get used to otherwise they may develop problems when they need to be left in later life.

Daytime

Teach your puppy how to feel safe when left alone by following very clear routines for being left and very gradually building up the length of time your puppy is on his own. Hints to help with this include: -

- Put his bed or crate in the room your puppy will be being left alone in as an adult
- Give puppy something warm to snuggle up to e.g. a warm water bottle or warm beanie.
- Place a DAP diffuser close to the bed or crate
- Try sprinkling lavender aromatherapy oil on a cloth and placing it among the bedding. Always read the label first.
- Start by leaving your puppy alone when he is tired and has been fed fairly recently
- Make sure you take him outside to empty his bladder and bowels (if necessary) before leaving him so he isn't restless because he needs to eliminate
- Set up a leaving routine that your puppy can learn to associate with departures he is happy with. This can include things like turning on a radio, giving him a special toy or



saying something e.g. “time to go.” Also do the things you would normally do when leaving the house e.g. picking up keys and putting on your coat.

- Give your puppy a safe chew or stuffed kong
- Gradually increase the duration you leave your puppy for. At first this should be for just a minute and you should leave the room but not the house. Gradually increase the length of time you leave your puppy for, by a minute at a time. Once you get to 10 minutes start to vary the durations e.g. 5 minutes, then 10 minutes then 7 minutes. Once you get to 20 minutes start to briefly leave the house. Allow him to hear the door close, wait a minute or two and then re-enter the house but don't go back to your puppy until the time is up. You can then start to gradually increase the length of time you are outside of the house. Once you have reached 40 minutes he should be settled into being left alone.
- If puppy has been quiet make a fuss of him to reward him
- If your puppy is whining or crying at the time you are due to go back to him wait until he has stopped. He only needs to stop for 5 seconds or so and then you can go back to him. However if you go back to him when he is actually crying this increases the likelihood he will cry again next time to see if it will make you come back again. If he won't stop crying you can make some kind of noise e.g. ring a bell or ring your home phone to see if the distraction stops him for long enough to allow you to re-enter the room/house
- Never ignore, punish or talk sternly to your puppy when you return to him, whatever he has done. He will think you are angry with him for greeting you or it may make him think you will always be angry with him when you first come home and so make him anxious whilst you are away.
- Once you are leaving your puppy home alone for more than 10 minutes you can start to occasionally make a video or audio recording to see how your puppy is behaving when he is alone.

The tips above suggest the ideal way of teaching a young puppy to feel confident when left alone. However this may not be practical for everyone. If circumstances mean you

will have to leave your puppy alone for more than a few minutes right from the start take the following steps to minimise any potentially negative impact: -

- Still follow the above programme to teach your puppy how to be happy alone
- When leaving him other than as part of the above familiarisation programme set up a crate as above but either use a different crate to the one being used above or put it in a different room
- Make sure puppy is fed, has had play and stimulation and has been allowed into the garden before being left
- Use the DAP diffuser, warm water bottle and lavender oil as discussed above
- Give your puppy a chew or stuffed kong
- Don't follow the leaving routine as described above and try to mask normal signs of departure such as putting on coats and picking up keys. We are using these as signals of 'safe' departures
- Follow the same routines for coming home i.e. not coming in when puppy is crying and never punishing on return
- If you need to leave your puppy for more than a few hours make arrangements for him to stay with family, friends or day care or for someone to come in regularly and spend time with your puppy and let him out. You must also expect to spend a lot more of your time in the evening and at weekends interacting and entertaining your puppy if you are leaving him alone for long during the day.

Once puppy gets to 6 months it may also be helpful to arrange occasional overnight stays with friends or family or days in doggy day-care so he learns to settle in strange places.

Night times

Where your puppy sleeps at night is a personal decision, and is based on where you would like him to sleep when he is grown up. Some people like their dog to sleep in their bedroom or even on their bed with them. This is fine as long as you always make it clear this is your decision by training your puppy to ask to get on the bed (Say please) and to get off the bed on command.

If you plan for your puppy to sleep in your bedroom all his life then night times can be managed by giving your puppy a small bed or crate in your bedroom. Prepare puppy for bed as follows: -

- Feed puppy about an hour before bedtime to help him settle so he isn't hungry
- Take your puppy out just before bed to empty his bladder and bowels
- Make sure he has had a period of play or stimulation before bedtime. Don't expect him to sleep all evening and then be happy to go straight back to sleep when it's time for bed. This can be play with you or with an interactive toy.
- Settle puppy into a bed or crate close to your bed. You can help him learn it's time to settle by saying something such as 'bed time'. After a few nights he will learn this means he needs to go to sleep.
- Ignore cries and whimpers when he is first being left to settle.
- If puppy cries in the night or first thing in the morning to go out, take him outside with the minimum of fuss. Stay with him outside until he has eliminated or for 5 minutes, whichever is the shorter, then bring him back in and pop him back into his bed or crate to settle again. In early morning you can also give him a toy or treat to entertain himself with until you are ready to get up.
- Avoid getting up in response to cries or whimpers other than to let him out to eliminate, although you can repeat the command 'bed time' once.
- Set an alarm to let your puppy know when it's time to get up. You can then get up when the alarm goes off even if your puppy is crying. As soon as he stops crying for 5 seconds or more you can make a fuss of him. Your puppy will learn after a few days that cries won't get you up until after the alarm has gone off.



If you would prefer your dog to sleep elsewhere in the house it is advisable to start by settling your puppy into a bed or crate in your bedroom and then gradually move him away over a period of a few weeks. His first day away from his dam and siblings will be a shock to his system and so being left alone overnight as well could be quite traumatic.

Over time he can then be gradually moved to the far side of your room, into the hall behind a stair gate and (if required) down stairs. Ideally he won't be completely separated from you overnight until he is at least 11 weeks old.

Once you are leaving your puppy in a separate room he needs to have an area for elimination as you may not know if he wants to go out in the night. If using a crate ensure it is large enough to allow your puppy a sleeping and water area separate from his elimination area. Alternatively enclose the crate with a play pen or other barrier and leave the door open so puppy can leave it to eliminate elsewhere.