



Published on ASPCA (<https://www.asPCA.org>)

[Home](#) > [Top Tips for Overcoming Separation Anxiety](#)

Top Tips for Overcoming Separation Anxiety



For many dogs, even the slightest change in daily routines can be upsetting. In response, poor Fido may start acting disruptive or destructive, especially when left home alone. He may resort to urinating and defecating indoors, howling, chewing, pacing or trying to escape from the house or yard. When these issues are accompanied by signs of panic, distress or depression, they may indicate your pooch suffers from separation anxiety.

But don't fear—we're here to help! When treating a dog with separation anxiety, the goal is to resolve the underlying issue by teaching him to enjoy—or at least tolerate—being left alone. Our experts have put together a list of top tips for helping your pooch overcome separation anxiety.

Doctor Knows Best: The first step in tackling behavior issues is to rule out any underlying medical problems that might be causing your pet's behavior. For example, if your pet is urinating in the house, he might be suffering from a urinary tract infection, bladder stones, diabetes or kidney disease—all of which can cause [urinary incontinence in dogs](#).

Conquer Fear: If your pooch suffers mild separation anxiety, counter conditioning—or helping your dog associate being alone with something good, like a tasty treat—might reduce or resolve the problem. To develop this kind of association, offer your dog a [food-dispensing toy](#) every time you leave the house.

Dogs Need Jobs: Providing lots of physical and mental stimulation is a vital part of treating many behavior problems, especially those involving anxiety. Exercise can enrich your dog's life, decrease stress and provide appropriate outlets for normal behavior. Plus, a tired dog doesn't have much excess energy to burn when he's left alone!

Prepare for Departure: Many dogs know when you're about to leave the house and will get anxious or prevent your departure altogether. One way to tackle "predeparture anxiety" is to teach your dog that when you pick up your keys or put on your coat, it doesn't always mean you're leaving. For example, put on your boots and coat, and then just sit down and watch TV instead of leaving.

Take Baby Steps: If your dog’s anxiety falls more on the severe side of things, try getting your pooch used to being alone by starting small or “desensitizing” him to the cause of his fear. Begin by introducing several short periods of separation that don’t produce anxiety, and then gradually increase time spent apart over the course of a few weeks.

Together We Stand: Any treatment for separation anxiety requires that your dog never experiences the full-blown version of whatever provokes his anxiety or fear. Avoid leaving your dog alone except during desensitization sessions. If possible, take your dog to work or arrange for a family member or dog sitter to come to your home during the day.

Keep it Mellow: All greetings—hellos and goodbyes—should be conducted in a very calm manner. When saying goodbye, just give your dog a pat on the head, say goodbye and leave. Similarly, when arriving home, say hello to your dog and then don’t pay any more attention to him until he’s calm and relaxed.

Say No to Tough Love: Anxious behaviors are not the result of disobedience or spite, so please don’t scold or punish your dog if he doesn’t overcome his fear quickly. If you punish him, he may become even more upset and the problem could get worse. Be patient, and work with your pet until he feels comfortable and enjoys spending time alone.

For more information about helping your pooch overcome separation anxiety, please visit our [virtual behaviorist](#).

Animal:

Dogs

Sitecore itemid:

18fcdc5d-0699-4a4c-82cc-0bd58461b57c

Sitecore key:

overcoming-separation-anxiety

Sitecore path:

/sitecore/content/Home/Pet-care/dog-care/overcoming-separation-anxiety

Source URL: <https://www.aspca.org/pet-care/dog-care/top-tips-overcoming-separation-anxiety>