BACK-TO-SCHOOL time can be stressful for every family member—including the family dog. Follow these tips to help your dog get accustomed to the new routine and avoid bad behaviors.

SEPARATION ANXIETY

With everyone gone to work or school all day, dogs left alone can become stressed, resulting in destructive behaviors and endless barking.

- Pay less attention to your dog A week before school starts, ignore your dog for increasing amounts of time each day so he gets used to not being the center of attention.
- Start early − Several weeks before school begins, get your
 dog comfortable with being alone by separating him from
 the family. If you often take your dog with you to
 run
 errands, leave him at home.
- Practice leaving the house Gather your gear, exit the door, but then come right back in again. Your dog will cease associating the routine of your leaving with your departure and will be more relaxed when you actually leave.
- Be calm and assured When leaving the house, you inadvertently confuse your dog if you say sweetly, "It's okay, Buster—we'll be home soon." If he is feeling concerned about your leaving, your happy, high-pitched voice tone can make him think it's OK to feel anxious. As pack animals, dogs expect their leaders to be strong when they leave the pack. Therefore, ignore your dog for about 10 minutes before you leave.

BOREDOM

Dogs sleep a lot during the day, but when they wake up, they want something to do. It doesn't take much to entertain a dog, even when you're not at home.

- Toys Dogs love toys, but they can quickly get bored with or destroy them. Buy high-quality, virtually indestructible puzzle toys that hold treats, like the Buster® Cube and KONG® products. Every few days, switch out the toys so your dog has new and fun things to hold his interest.
- Oscatter food Dogs are natural foragers who enjoy looking for food on the ground. Scatter bits of raw vegetables, dog kibble, and other foods that won't attract wasps around the yard when you leave. Hide some treats so your dog spends extra time looking for them. Always provide lots of fresh, clean water for him to drink.

SHELTER

Dogs need to have their own "home," a place where they feel secure and comfortable. If your dog doesn't already have a place of his own, create one for him.

- Crate Most dogs love the safety of a crate. Because dogs are descended from den-dwelling animals, a crate makes a natural shelter. If your dog hasn't been crate trained, don't start training him the day the kids leave for school. That's too late and can actually add to his stress.
- ► Laundry room If you are concerned about your inside-dog toileting in the house, enclose him in a small room (which inhibits the tendency to toilet) and has an easy-clean floor (in case he has an accident). Place a soft bed and toys in the room for him too.
- Doghouse Be sure your outside-dog has shelter so he can escape the weather. Dogs are more relaxed when they are covered and in familiar surroundings. Place the dog house next to the house so he feels it is an extension of the larger "den," and add some comfy bedding.

UNUSUAL BEHAVIOR

A stressed dog can begin to exhibit bad behaviors, such as jumping up or biting. Sometimes a dog will greet children roughly when they arrive home from school, even knocking a child to the floor. After being alone all day, the dog's pent-up energy may cause him to overreact.

- Train the kids Train your children to avoid going right to the dog's area as soon as they get home. Have them ignore the pet for five minutes to allow him to settle down. With young children, it is best to have an adult present to reduce the chance of a problem. Once your dog learns the routine, he will relax.



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