

How to stop your dog crying when left alone

A lot of dogs deal with anxiety, all at different levels. One of the big signs? Barking, crying, howling, and other vocalizing. This is your pup's way of communicating they're unhappy being left alone. And while your canine crooner may not be hurting anyone with this behavior, your neighbors may object to the new soundtrack.

So what do you do? Here are some tips from Adopt a Pet:



1. Set a reliable daily routine

Adopted dogs undergo a big change when they come home with you! But really any change to a dog's routine can lead to anxiety (like different work hours, a new roommate, or a big move.) So, as much as possible, give your dog time to adjust to the change and set a reliable daily routine, with a set schedule around meals, play, and exercise.

2. Give regular daily exercise

Your dog's unspent energy always comes out somehow! Better it be running around the block with you, than singing the classics while you're gone! Right before you leave, try going for a walk or having some playtime. Exercise releases serotonin in dog brains too. So they'll likely feel more happy, calm, and relaxed when you leave.

3. Desensitize your exits

Try "faking out" your dog the next dozen times you leave. Only go down the hallway, to your front door, or down the driveway. Then come back. Repeat and wait five minutes before coming back. Repeat again, but this time actually leave. This helps your dog get used to the idea of you leaving and coming back, so they're less likely to cry.

4. Skip dramatic farewells

Combine this with #5! When you're getting ready to leave, gather up your things and leave as if you're coming right back. Skip any hugs, kisses, or drama. (As hard as that might be!) In fact, don't even say "Goodbye!" as that will just alert your dog to the fact that you're leaving. Instead, just make a quick and casual exit.

5. Keep your return casual

Even though you'll want to give them a huge hug, follow the same low-key approach when you return. Ignore any attention-seeking (like jumping, howling, or going crazy) and wait a few minutes until your dog is calm to greet them. If they have to go out immediately, you can naturally take them! Just do so without any fanfare.

6. Give them background noise

Talk radio stations or TV news channels generally work best. But you could try a noise machine or music depending on your pup's preferences. There are also pet-specific tv and music channels you can find online! Whatever you choose, we'd recommend putting the volume at a level that mimics the sound of people talking in your home.



7. Distract them with puzzle toys

Beyond physical exercise, mental exercise can help relieve anxiety too. Try giving your pup a food-based puzzle toy right before you go. That'll keep them busy (at least for a bit) while you're gone. Just make sure you get the right size toy for your dog. Even better? Get a few different toys, and rotate, so they feel new and exciting for your dog.

8. Try crate training

Crate training works well for certain dogs, but not for others. So take the training slowly to see if it helps the vocalizing. Once you've slowly increased their time in the crate, healthy adult dogs can be crated for up to 4 hours while you're away. Just make sure you have chew-proof crate pads and nothing on top your pup can pull in.

Get more tips here:



9. Invest in a ThunderShirt

ThunderShirt works by applying gentle, constant pressure, kind of like a weighted blanket! Research shows this pressure can release calming hormones. And many rescuers report that ThunderShirts will work miracles on dogs that cry when left alone. (As the name suggests, they're also great for pups that get nervous during storms!)

10. Get a pet camera

This will help you keep tabs on your pup while you're away, and let you know what is (and isn't) working. Sometimes dogs only cry right as you're leaving, then settle down. And the more you know about what upsets them, the more you can help address your dog's specific issues. Plus, it'll probably help your own anxiety about leaving too!

11. Look into supplements

Pay your vet a visit to discuss if your dog could benefit from a probiotic. Studies have shown they can help dogs maintain calm behavior. You can also try natural homeopathic anxiety remedies, like calming treats or "DAP" (Dog Appeasing Pheromone) collars or plug-ins. Both are available in pet stores. Just check with your vet first!

12. Find a dog walker, sitter, or daycare.

If you have to leave your pup for a longer period of time, you may want to find a reliable dog walker, dog sitter, or doggie daycare. This could be part of your daily routine together or just an occasional resource you use. This can be especially helpful if your dog needs a lot of exercise or other separation anxiety tips aren't working right away!

13. Talk to your vet

Does nothing seem to be working or does your dog's anxiety seem worse than most? Some dogs need some extra help with separation anxiety, so talk to your vet! They may suggest you work with a trainer or behaviorist. Or they may prescribe medications (like "doggie prozac") that can help relieve anxiety or sedate your dog.

14. Adopt a friend

Of course, only do this if you're ready to love, care, and be responsible for a new pet! But if you've considered adopting another dog, this can help anxiety in certain breeds that don't like to be left alone. Just make sure to find a good match for your existing pup. You can start your search with specific criteria on adoptapet.com.



So, will these tips work?

It's all about finding out what works best for your pup. Likely, you'll land on a combination of these tips. But the most important thing? Keep trying and don't be too hard on yourself! Dealing with separation anxiety takes time and consistency. We know it can be tough on dog parents, and we want you to have all the tools possible to live the best life with your pup. So for more advice check out: adoptapet.com, thewildest.com, and our app, The Kin.