



Working_from_Home

with Your DOG



More and more lucky dog owners are able to work from home (or take their dogs to the office) and don't have to routinely leave their furry friends during the week. Some dogs ease into this scenario and are able to be with their owners throughout the day without exhibiting behaviour issues. For others, however, there are a number of problems that may arise—such as dogs demanding attention by barking or whining, often at the worst possible times.

Why do dogs act up in the home-office environment?



Because of the large amount of time spent together in close proximity, these dogs often have increased opportunities to train their owners! They might nudge for pats or climb in laps. They often nap under the table or desk where their owners are working, but when they wake up, they will request attention—and usually get it.

While seemingly cute and innocent, whenever a dog gets to direct the behaviour of his owner, he sees himself as being put in the leadership role. And as the leader, a dog may feel he needs to demand his owner's attention—often at inopportune times, such as when the owner is on the phone or involved in an important assignment.

What can I do?



- **Separate workspace from dog space.** Go to work in another room, separated from your dog. It's important that your work area is off-limits and that your dog is confined (either gated or crated in another room) so he doesn't have access to you. If he barks for your attention at first, you may want to have at least a couple of closed doors between you as he gets used to the new situation. Make sure to give him something to occupy his attention, such as a treat-rewarding Buster® Cube or KONG® toy.
- **Do NOT to go to your dog's space if you hear any barking, whining or pacing.** Only return when he's calm and quiet. If you return when he's acting out of stress, he will learn that making a fuss is rewarded with your attention.
- **Practice obedience when you do return.** Training your dog engages his brain. This will tire him out and help him become calmer. Ask him to SIT and STAY before you pet him or toss a toy.
- **Be proactive in asking for your dog's attention and focus.** Always begin play on your terms; for instance, if he brings you a certain toy for play, take control of the toy and wait until later to bring it out yourself and initiate play.
- **Work on establishing set times for interactions.** If you went off to work without your dog, you would only have certain times when you could interact with him. For example, take a 10–15 minute break mid-morning and again in the afternoon, or a half hour at lunchtime. Do what works for you and also meets your dog's physical and mental needs. It's important that you don't continuously stop what you are doing and engage with your dog. He'll quickly get used to the cues you give for your set interactions and will settle down quicker during the in-between times.

Be patient, calm and consistent. Your dog's bad behaviours are simply learned behaviours, because they have worked in the past; he will only make a different choice if those strategies no longer result in your attention and what he interprets as praise. If you never separate from your dog, he will have a hard time feeling comfortable by himself when you do have to leave him. Practicing separation while working from home or with your dog at the office will help you both be more relaxed and happy, together or apart.

