



BACK-TO-SCHOOL

Tips for Families with Dogs



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 behaviours.

SEPARATION ANXIETY

With everyone going back to work, dogs left alone can become stressed, resulting in destructive behaviours and endless barking.

- ☞ **Start to pay less attention to your dog** - A week or so before the start of school pay a little less attention to your dog, so that he is not used to being the centre of attention.
- ☞ **Start early** - A few weeks before school begins, get your dog comfortable with being left alone by separating him for short periods of time. If you often take your dog with you on errands, occasionally leave your dog at home to form the new routine.
- ☞ **Practice leaving the house** - Gather your gear, exit the door, but then come right back in again. Your dog will stop 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 can 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 okay to feel anxious. Dogs need strong leadership. Start to pay a little less attention to your dog about, 10 minutes before leaving the home.

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 them or destroy them. Buy high-quality, virtually indestructible puzzle toys that hold treats, like the GameChanger™ or Buster Cube™. Every few days, switch out the toys so your dog has different and fun things to hold his interest.
- ☞ **Scatter 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 garden 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 and adapt well to their new place of safety. It makes them feel safe and provides their shelter. If your dog hasn't been crate trained, don't start training him the day the kids leave for school. It's too late and could actually add to the stress. Accustom your dog a few weeks in advance. Never leave your dog for prolonged periods in the crate.
- ☞ **Utility room** - If you are concerned about your 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.
- ☞ **Outside Dogs** - If your dog spends most of the time outside, be sure he has shelter so he can escape the weather. Dogs are more relaxed when they are covered and in familiar surroundings. Placing a kennel next to the house so he feels it is an extension of the larger "den", and adding some comfy bedding, will help too.

UNUSUAL BEHAVIOUR

A stressed dog can begin to exhibit bad behaviours, 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** - Get your children to avoid going right to the dog's area as soon as they get home. Have them ignore your dog for five minutes or so 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 quicker.
- ☞ **Train your dog** - It is amazing how quickly dogs learn what is acceptable and what is not. Dogs have a language of their own and, once we understand it, we can easily manage them. Bark Busters specialise in using your dog's natural, instinctive communication methods to train them. Talk to your local Bark Busters Therapist. It's simple, and it works!

* Start to accustom your dog to the new routine a few weeks before your kids go back to school. This can help to minimise any unwanted behaviour problems.



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