

How to prevent separation anxiety

Work through these steps to help your puppy feel comfortable being left alone. Also check out the sheet 'How to encourage relaxation' if you are going to leave them for more than a few minutes.

1) Build in distance while in sight:

Secure your puppy either in a pen or tethered, stay with them while you do some emails etc, then go away from them but remain in sight to do a short task, such as making a cuppa and come straight back. Ideally we want your puppy to be able to handle this without barking or crying. Do lots of versions of this where your puppy cannot follow you to the other side of the room.

2) Build in duration while in sight:

Start doing tasks away from them for longer, they can still see you but cannot access you. Write down how long you can leave before they barks.

3) Out of sight:

Then start to leave the room and come straight back. This is just getting them used to you leaving and it being no big deal.

4) Build duration out of sight:

Start leaving them for longer. In an ideal world you want them to handle these short absences without any barking. It is a good idea to write down how long you can leave before they bark.

If your gone for a longer period: You can try leaving your puppy with a safe chew or a filled Kong. The first time you introduce something new, supervise them to ensure that type of chew is safe to leave with your puppy. Here are some suggestions:

- Calf hooves filled with wet puppy food, they are easier than kongs.
- Another idea is to sprinkle some tasty chicken onto an old towel, scrunch or roll it up, and place it in their pen. They can find the chicken while you take a shower or attend to other tasks.

How to react to barking/crying - Understanding the difference between a dog that is frustrated because they just want to be let out and a dog that is distressed is key here. If they are distressed they will not settle and may get worse. If they are just frustrated then as long as all needs have been met then I tend to ignore and wait for them to quiet down before letting them out of the pen or tether. If they don't settle after a while, take them to the toilet on lead then back in the pen with a chew.