



Home Alone –

Building a Dog's Tolerance to

SEPARATION

It has been observed in wild dogs that the mother dog will periodically move from one den to another. She will move the pups one at a time, choosing a different one to leave alone each time, either in the new or in the old den. Good breeders do the same thing, leaving puppies alone for short periods of time. In fact, without this early learning, a puppy can become too dependent on the presence of others. So, with this in mind, as the school year begins, the family dog will need to adjust to a new household schedule. Some dogs may need more help adjusting than others, but it is always good to plan ahead and teach your dog some skills that will help her cope with her new daily routine.

Here are three components that will help build a dog's tolerance to aloneness...



Physical Exercise

No one can be restful when they are full of energy! And, when we leave a dog at home alone, we are hoping that she will spend that time sleeping, not bored, restless, and worrying about where her human family is. So, exercise and aerobic activity is particularly important in the morning. By satisfying her physical needs early in the day, she is more likely to spend her alone time resting comfortably.

* <http://mywoofgang.com/handouts/KongStuffingRecipes.pdf>

Mental Stimulation

Thinking can be exhausting, as you well know after a day in school! By providing a dog tasty stuffed puzzle toys with her meal or a snack to enjoy in your absence, we are not only giving her mental gymnastics to tire out her brain, but we are also giving her something to occupy her thoughts and we are associating our absence with tasty activities. (For some tasty stuffing recipes, see the handout Kongs Fit for King at the link below)*

Training

Training is the most important part of building a dog's tolerance to separation and aloneness. The crate can be really helpful as a tool, as it provides an enclosure that is safe and contains all the things she is permitted access to. But simply putting her in the crate, closing the door and leaving for the day is only setting a dog up for a very bad experience. Training must be done to help her tolerate – and even enjoy – the crate. (You can find handouts on crate-training and separation training at <http://mywoofgang.com/resources.php>)

So, now's the time to teach your dog how enjoyable it can be to have some alone time. Going back to school is an occasion for everyone to learn a little something new, even the family dog!

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