



# Back to School Tips

## for Families with Dogs

**SCHOOL STARTS SOON and can be a stressful time for every family member - including the family dog. Follow these tips to help your dog get accustomed to the new routine and avoid bad behaviors.**

### **SEPARATION ANXIETY:**

*With everyone gone to work or school all day, dogs left alone can become stressed, resulting in destructive behavior and endless barking.*

- **Pay less attention to your dog** - A few weeks before school starts, ignore your dog for increasing amounts of time each day so he gets used to not being the center of attention.
- **Start early** - Several weeks before school begins, get your dog comfortable with being alone by separating him from the family. If you often take your dog with you to run errands, leave him at home.
- **Practice leaving the house** - Gather your gear, exit the door, but then come right back in again. Your dog will cease 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 mistakenly confuse your dog if you sweetly say "It's OK, I will be home soon". If he is feeling concerned about your leaving, your happy, high-pitched voice tone can make him think it is ok to feel anxious. Simply ignore your dog when you leave.

### **BOREDOM:**

*Dogs sleep a lot during the day, but when they wake up, they want something to do. Be sure you have left some form of entertainment when gone.*

- **Toys** - Dogs love toys, but they can quickly get bored with or destroy them. We like KONG® Toys because of their quality and that they are made in the USA. Deer antlers are also completely natural and make a great chewing toy.
- **Scatter food** - Dogs are natural foragers who enjoy looking for food on the ground. Scatter bits of raw vegetables, doggie kibble, and other food that won't attract ants or other critters on the ground when you leave. Hide treats so they can search for them. Always provide enough water for hydration.

### **SHELTER:**

*Dogs need to have their own "home"; a place where they can feel safe and secure.*

- **Crate** - Most dogs love the safety of a crate. Because dogs are descended from den-dwelling animals, a crate creates a natural shelter. If your dog hasn't been crate trained, you need to start to train him as quickly as possible. Don't wait until the first day of school.
- **Laundry room** - If you are worried about your dog pottying in the house, place him in a small room with an easily cleaned floor. (The small area inhibits pottying.) Place a soft bed and toys to distract him.
- **Dog House** - If you have an outside dog, make sure he has a shelter that will keep him out of the heat, sun, and rain. Dogs are more comfortable with a "place of their own". Place it near the house and have some toys, water, and bedding in the dog house.

### **UNUSUAL BEHAVIOR:**

*A stressed dog can begin to exhibit bad behaviors, 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 adrenaline is spiked and may cause him to overreact.*

- **Train the kids** - Train your children to avoid going right to the dog's area as soon as they get home. Have them ignore him for five minutes 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.
- **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. Do not respond to their "crazy" with your "crazy"; stay calm and focused. Face him, stand tall, and have a low, resolute tone in your voice to correct and guide them.