

Five Ways to Help Your Dog Cope With Time Away from You

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You and your dog, you're like peas in a pod, BFFs, buddies, soul mates.

He walks beside you in a perfect heel, gazing up at your face. He hangs on your every word and responds to any command with drill-team precision.

He's the perfect canine companion, except when you have to leave him. Then he becomes a crying, whining, drooling bundle of nerves. He tugs so hard at a leash in another person's hand—and your heartstrings—that you avoid going places because it might upset the dog.

If this sounds familiar, it may be time to take a good look at your relationship. Sure, it's great to be loved so deeply, but it's not really all that healthy. Someday you may have to leave him [with a sitter](#), the vet, or a boarding facility. Sometimes you may have to go someplace where dogs are not allowed, like work, for example.

That's why in the [Canine Good Citizen test](#) there is a section called "Supervised Separation." CGC evaluators tell us that when dogs do not pass the test, it's usually because of this. The dogs may have been perfect in every other way, but they found it unbearable to be away from their beloved humans for even three minutes.

We asked our [CGC Facebook fans](#) for advice. Here are some of the best tips from trainers, evaluators, and people whose dogs passed the test:

1. **Begin by leaving your dog with another person briefly**, and have the stranger offer good treats and lots of praise. Then gradually increase the time. For dogs with more anxiety, you should walk in and out of the room several times, counting only to 10 before re-entering.
2. **Play “hide and seek” in new places.** Leave the dog with a person you know but he doesn't, and walk away. Then, have the stranger release the dog to look for you. That way, being held on a leash by a stranger becomes part of a game.
3. **Practice down–stays at home.** Only give the dog a treat if the down–stay is maintained, even when you go into another room. It makes staying a fun game, not a cause for anxiety.
4. If the dog is acquired as a puppy, **teach separation as part of socialization training**, starting in the home before the puppy has all shots. Invite a friend over to help. The visitor occupies the puppy while owner briefly steps out and returns. And then raise the bar and eventually move into the “real world.” Keep all sessions very short and upbeat.
5. **Be matter of fact with all departures and returns.** Show no great displays of sorrow upon parting, and no celebrations when you come back. That way, the process becomes no big deal.

Test this and your dog's other skills by attending one of our [Canine Good Citizen training events in New York City](#).

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