

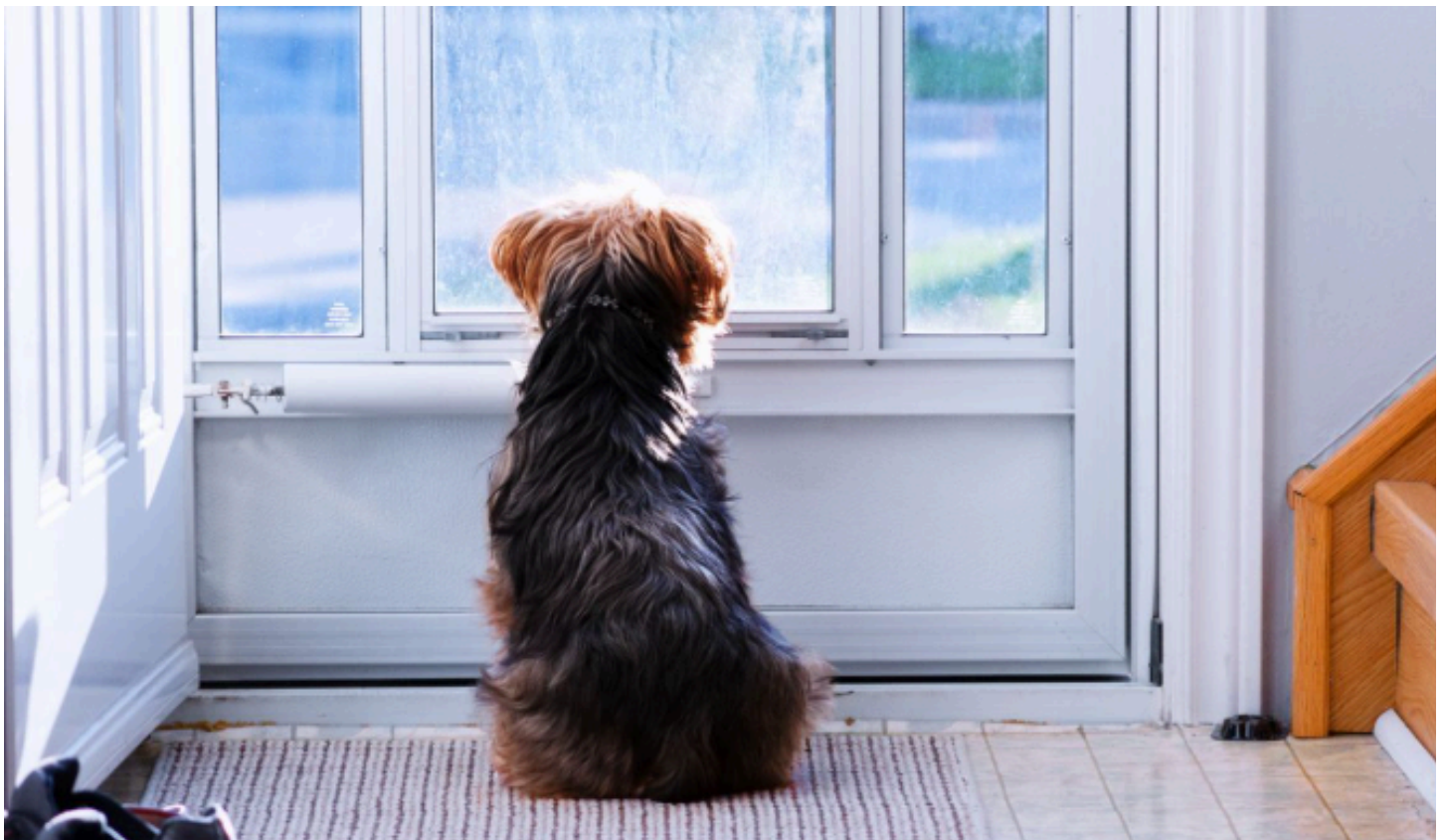
## **Setting your Puppy up to be Happy Home Alone -**

### **A guide to preventing separation anxiety, in collaboration with Pooches Galore**

#### **What Is Separation Anxiety?**

Separation anxiety is a panic disorder that some dogs experience when they are left home alone or separated from their primary caregiver – even if other people are present.

A puppy experiencing separation anxiety or separation related distress is not being naughty. They are genuinely frightened and struggling to cope.



#### **Signs Your Puppy Struggles Being Alone**

Dogs may show one or more of the following when home alone:

- Excessive barking, whining, crying, or howling
- Chewing or destroying flooring, walls, doors (especially near exits)
- Frantic attempts to escape – sometimes leading to injury
- Toileting indoors despite usually being house-trained

- Becoming anxious when they notice you preparing to leave.

**Key feature: These behaviours happen only when left alone or separated from their primary caregiver.**



**Normal Puppy Behaviour vs. Fear-Based Behaviour**

<b>Behaviour</b>	<b>Typical Puppy</b>	<b>Frightened puppy</b>
<b>Barking</b>	May bark briefly, settles quickly	Barks/whines constantly until you return
<b>Chewing</b>	Chews toys or random objects regardless of company (exploration/mischief!)	Chews doors/window frames to escape; frantic & persistent
<b>Soiling</b>	Toilet training is still in progress; accidents can happen	Usually house-trained; accidents only occur when alone.

**Context matters: Typical behaviour happens whether you're there or not.**

**Fear behaviour happens only when the puppy is alone or separated from their person.**

**Before We Leave a Puppy Alone: The SAFE Checklist**

To help your puppy cope well, check that they are:

**S – Sleepy**

**A – All played out**

**F – Full tummy**

**E – Empty bladder**

A puppy who has had their needs met is more likely to settle calmly.



### **About “Crying It Out”**

Puppies cannot learn to be comfortable alone by being left to panic. When we panic we are not in a state to learn new things. As such we are unable to settle, the same is true for our dogs. When dogs experience separation anxiety they feel genuine fear and panic, similar to us experiencing a panic attack. If we ignore this distress we are not teaching them to cope, instead we are reinforcing that being home alone is unsafe.

Instead if we respond with empathy we are teaching our puppy that they can trust us and that they can have confidence in us.

We do not cause separation anxiety – but forcing puppies to cope for longer than they are ready for can make things worse.

If your puppy is crying because they are scared and alone, you should return.

**This teaches your puppy: “When I am really scared, my person helps me.”**

Over time, this builds trust and confidence.

Ideally, never leave your puppy longer than they can comfortably cope with.



## **How to Prevent Separation Anxiety**

### **1) Socialise your puppy well**

Puppies who have positive experiences with the world tend to be more confident alone.

Socialisation is far more than greeting other dogs – it is about calm, safe exposure to:

- Sounds
- Surfaces
- People
- Objects
- Locations
- Handling
- Novel experiences

Well-socialised puppies develop emotional resilience, which helps them feel safe when home alone.

### **2) Build alone time gradually**

Your puppy cannot be left for long periods from day one, this needs to be factored in to your lifestyle for the first few weeks of puppy ownership.

After they have settled with you then you'll help them learn by starting with small absences and progressing slowly at a pace your puppy can cope with and always feels happy with.

Step-by-step:

1. Begin with very short absences – seconds, not minutes.
2. Leave only for as long as your puppy stays calm.
3. Return before they begin to worry.
4. Gradually increase duration as they remain relaxed.
5. Celebrate calm behaviour: quiet = success!

Think of this as training a new skill, not something puppies naturally know. They have been with their mum and littermates all of the time before they came to live with you. They have no skills to be on their own and need to learn that being alone is safe and a time for rest.

**Your puppy's job is to stay relaxed.**

**Your job is to keep them feeling safe and prevent panic.**

### **3) Practice separation within the home**

Alone doesn't always mean you've left the house. Help your puppy learn that time apart is safe by:

- Using baby gates or playpens so they can settle nearby
- Giving chews, licking mats, or toys while you move around
- Encouraging naps away from you
- Rewarding calm, independent behaviour

**This teaches the puppy: "Being on my own feels safe."**

### **4) Create positive "leaving" associations**

Help your puppy feel good when you leave:

- Prepare calmly (no dramatic exits), you also don't have to ignore them as you may have read.
- Offer enrichment (e.g., filled Kong, sniffing games)
- Keep returns low-key, again you don't have to ignore them just low key.



**Consistency builds confidence.**

### **5) Avoid These Common Mistakes**

- Leaving your puppy before they're ready
- Ignoring fear-based crying
- Only practising when you have to leave
- Relying solely on tiring them out
- Asking them to “push through” distress

**Your puppy is learning safety – we don't rush that.**

### **When to Seek Help**

Ask a certified behaviour professional if:

- Your puppy struggles even with short absences
- They panic every time you leave the room
- They show intense vocalisation, destruction, or escape attempts
- Progress isn't happening

**The sooner you get support, the easier it is to help your puppy.**



### **Key Takeaways**

- Separation anxiety is a panic disorder, not misbehaviour.
- Look at context – does it happen only when alone?
- Never leave your puppy longer than they can cope with.
- Build alone time in small, successful steps.
- Comforting a frightened puppy does not reinforce fear.
- Practice short, positive separations at home.
- Ask for help early if you're concerned.

### **You're not alone!!!**

Teaching your puppy to be happy home alone is a journey – you're doing great by being proactive.

With patience, planning, and support, most puppies can learn that alone time is safe and relaxing.

**If you are worried about your dog's behaviour, feel free to give Kim at Pooches Galore on 07919 150223 or have a look at her website; [www.poochesgalore.co.uk](http://www.poochesgalore.co.uk)**

**To book in for your puppy in for a health check, please call us on 01423 228080 or visit [www.clarohillvets.co.uk](http://www.clarohillvets.co.uk)**