

If your dog feels stressed when he or she can't be around you, or suffers from separation anxiety, daily independence training can increase his or her confidence with being alone. Below you will find advice to help increase your dogs' independence.

### IGNORE ATTENTION SEEKING BEHAVIOUR

- Anytime your dog is seeking attention – nudging, licking, staring, barking, pawing, whining – completely ignore him or her. Do not talk to, look at or touch him or her. If he or she is persistent, turn your back, cross your arms and look away. Do not push him or her away or say 'no'.
- When your dog is calm and not seeking attention, give a command (e.g. sit) and reward with treats and attention.

### REWARD INDEPENDENT BEHAVIOUR

- Dogs who suffer from separation related distress often prefer to stay near you and follow you around as much as they can. If your dog is able to be independent from you, even for a few minutes, reward him by calmly walking over and offering him a treat, then walk away again.

### MAT TRAINING

**Step one:** Use a treat to lure your dog on the mat. The moment your dog touches the mat, bridge and reward. Once your dog goes to his or her mat reliably, only bridge and reward when your dog's whole body is positioned on the mat. You can add the verbal cue "go to your mat".

**Step two:** After a few repeats ask your dog to sit or drop on the mat.

**Step three:** Once your dog is able to sit or drop on their mat reliably, you can increase the duration he or she spends on his mat.

Start by asking your dog to sit or drop, then stand directly in front of him or her for a few seconds. If he or she doesn't move, bridge and reward. If he or she moves, just lure him or her back and repeat the exercise with a shorter duration.

**Step four:** Start moving away from the mat. Take a single quick step backwards with one foot, step back forwards immediately. If your dog didn't move, bridge and reward. You can increase the distance you are walking away from your dog step by step.

**Step five:** The goal is to be able to cue your dog to their mat and walk out of the room briefly while your dog continues to feel relaxed on their bed.

### LOW KEY DEPARTURE FROM HOME

- When you leave your dog alone, spend around 20-30 minutes beforehand giving minimal attention.
- When you leave, toss a handful of high-value treats on your dog's bed. Then just quietly slip out the door.

### LOW KEY ARRIVAL AT HOME

- Give a quick, low-key greeting when you arrive at home.
- Do not give your dog any further attention for around 15 minutes or until he or she is showing calm behaviour. For example, four feet on the ground, lying on his or her bed, or no vocalisation.

### ENRICHMENT

- Remember to always leave your dog with something interesting to do. Have a high-value treat such as a Kong, bone or chew toy available to give as you leave – the aim is to make sure that something fantastic happens every time you leave.

### TIPS



*Allow access to the house when the dog is alone to help him or her feel safe.*

*Leave the radio on softly when the dog is left alone to give the impression of company.*



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**More questions? Need help?**  
**Email our professional behaviour trainers on**  
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