

So, instead of teaching him not behave that way again, you are actually making it MORE likely that he will mess or chew. This is because he/she is now worried about your reaction when you return home and so becomes stressed. Stressed animals mess and stressed animals chew.

So, what so you do if you come home to chewed cushions and wet floors? Simply remove the dog from the area and clear up. Then look at the possible reasons for the behaviour and address the dog's training needs.

There are many reason for dog's messing when left, including:

- Your dog is not fully house-trained
- You left him too long
- He was worried at being alone
- He was ill

There are also several reason for chewing and scratching when left, including:

- It's great fun
- Your dog was disturbed by a sound outside
- Your dog didn't have any appropriate toys to play with - he/she was bored

So, what needs to be done? More Practice sessions? Better toys? Better guidance for using the toys? Come home sooner? Take the dog to the vet for a health check? Leave the radio playing softly to help mask outdoor noises? Give some remedial cage training?

By looking at the possible causes and their solutions it should be easy to actively train your dog to be happily left at home alone for a couple of hours.



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Naturally, dogs are social creatures. This means that dogs who live in single pet households need to be taught how to cope with isolation. However, even dogs who live with other dogs need to be taught how to cope when their owner is not there, e.g. if one dog needs to stay overnight at the vet's surgery. To expect a dog to stay at home and guard the house quietly, without messing on the carpet or chewing the furniture is unrealistic unless you give acceptable alternatives. Of course, there are some dogs who live up to these high expectations, but these dogs should be thought of as exception rather than the rule.

Even if you are around for most of the time, it is still important to teach home alone skill. What if you are called away on an emergency? Will you really have time to arrange for your neighbour to come round to stay with your dog? What if you need to leave your dog with someone else - can you be confident that he/she won't mess or chew their house? What if you have friends round that don't like or are nervous of dogs? Can you happily leave your dog in another room without spoiling their visit?



With a little forward planning and preparation, most dogs learn pretty quickly how to cope when they're left alone. You can begin by leaving your dog confined in his cage (see Cage Training Information leaflet) or in one room e.g. the kitchen, with the door closed while you stay in another. Leave him/her with his stuffed Kongs, bones and favourite activity toys. Investing in these hard-wearing, safe toys could save you having to replace your 3-piece suite, your front door or your kitchen units. After a few minutes, open the door and let him/her have free access to you again.

Don't make a big deal about this or fuss him/her too much. The idea is that being alone is rewarding i.e. he/she gets to play with his/her favourite things and getting access to you, in this situation this is pretty uneventful. If he/she whines or scratches do not open the door. Wait until he/she's quiet, even for a second, and then open the door. Opening the door when he/she's fussing will teach him/her that making a fuss causes you to return to him/her—the opposite of what you actually want him/her to learn!

If you can't leave your dog alone in a room when you are in the house to monitor his/her progress, it is unreasonable to expect to be able to leave him/her completely alone when you have to go out. Therefore, you should practise this and get your dog into a routine of going into his/her room.

Often the kitchen is a good choice as it is easy to clean should he/she have an accident. Simply give him/her his/her chew toys, ensure he/she has bedding and fresh water and say goodbye in a low key manner.

Then, when you do go out for real, go through the same routine as before. He/she should be confident in the knowledge that being left is rewarding, and that you will come back to him/her so there's no need to worry.

If the worst happens and you do return to mess and destruction, **DO NOT SCOLD YOUR DOG**. To punish a dog for behaving naturally is self-defeating and can make matters worse. Dogs cannot make the mental leap required to link pooing half an hour ago or chewing the cupboard door five minutes ago with your anger now. To them, it will seem as if they are being punished for no reason. You will seem unpredictable and scary. Now, many people say "Oh, he/she knew he'd/she'd done wrong because he/she looked guilty!" Dogs don't understand the concept of guilt, but they do understand threatening body language and verbal punishments. Hence, which is why they will try to make themselves as small and as insignificant as possible

They are trying to appease you, not show you that they're sorry for their behaviour. Punishing a dog for trying to appease you only makes him/her try even harder to appease you and becomes more worried.