**Puppy essentials: Leaving them on their own**

Get your puppy used to short periods alone before trying to leave them for longer.

It surprises many people to hear that separation issues can often result from your puppy or dog being anxious *upon* your return, rather than because you are away.

If on return to the house your puppy has displayed any unwanted behaviours e.g. chewed up its blanket or soiled, it is important they are not told off. Your puppy could have done this a while before and will not understand why you are angry now. Instead, they will associate you coming home with you being in a bad mood, and so will become more nervous and anxious about your return next time, escalating the problem. Instead, ignore any unwanted behaviour, and sort it out when your puppy is out of sight.

A crate will help with this training as it will mean your puppy is in a secure place and can feel safe.

Read our article *Puppy essentials: Crates and playpens* on our website, in the Pet Care Advice section.

**Top tips**

**Relaxed hellos and goodbyes.** Don't give your dog lots of fuss just before you leave, as it will mark it out as being A BIG DEAL. Then act the same way when you come back into the house – you don't need to completely ignore your dog but don't make a big fuss. If your dog is really excited to see you, take a minute to take off your shoes, set down your bags and then say hello.

**A bit of noise.** If you normally have a busy household or have a radio, music or TV on then leave this on when you go out, so the house isn't suddenly quiet. Reach has found that dogs find classical, soft rock and reggae music the most relaxing and there is music specifically composed for dogs, but it is important that your dog is used to the sounds so it may be best to leave on what you usually have on, but at a quieter volume.

**Get them ready for down time.** Have a playtime or take them for a walk before you go out to help tire them and make them more likely to sleep. Let them have plenty of sniffing time which uses their brains but avoid exciting games such as fetch.

**Something to distract.** If they don't already, introduce your dog to food toys such as a Kong, treat balls or other chewable toys that are suitable for puppies. Chewing is incredibly relaxing for dogs.