

# **Raising A Puppy While Working Full Time**

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Leaving a puppy alone while at work is something you'll probably be concerned about and you'll want to be sure that your puppy is safe, happy and healthy if you plan to do this. We'll talk about how long a puppy can be left alone during the day, what to do with your puppy while you are at work, how to crate train a puppy when you work and much more.

## **Solving Puppy Problems That Can Arise While You Work**

I am often asked questions by new puppy owners that are leaving their puppy alone in the house all day. They are not sure what to do with their puppy while at work. They are having problems with house-training. Or problems with him chewing stuff, and with barking or howling while they are gone. Let's look first at some of the problems that can arise, when people attempt to combine a full-time job with a puppy. And at how we can help you to avoid them.

### **Crate Accidents**

A common problem in home alone puppies is 'bed wetting'. The owner has read that crate training is a good idea, which it is, but has not read the part about the puppy's bladder capacity.

During the day, many 8-10 week old puppies have a tiny bladder capacity that can hold around 1-2 hours' urine. Maximum. Of course, there are some that can last much longer. But they usually belong to someone else. Some puppies will last not much more than twenty minutes at certain times of the day during the first week or so. As you can see, it is not possible to leave a brand new puppy in a crate for longer than an hour or two at most (during the day) without risking accidents. This doesn't mean you can't crate train your puppy and we'll talk about that in a moment.

## **Why Does It Matter If He Pees In His Crate?**

Does it really matter if the puppy has an accident in his crate at this age? Won't he just grow out of it? Well, yes it does matter, because once a puppy has wet his bed a few times, he'll stop minding. He'll also stop *trying* to hold on for a bit longer. This can delay the house training process considerably and even create a long term bed wetting problem. Which is, of course, the opposite of what we want.

## **Where Is The Best Place To Leave Puppy While You Work?**

So, if you are out at work for several hours, you can't leave your puppy in a crate. Nor can you give your tiny puppy the 'run of the house'. He'll pee and poop everywhere, and chew up your things. This means you'll either need to puppy proof a safe room for him, or provide him with a playpen.

## **A Puppy Proof Room**

Many people realize this, and just leave the puppy in their kitchen, because, sensibly, it has a washable floor. Depending on your home, even this arrangement may not be ideal. Unfortunately, many puppies left alone for hours on end, will chew things up. This includes the cable on your refrigerator, the kitchen towel you left trailing over the edge of the unit, and the Puppy Pads you put down for him to pee on. So you can see you will need to 'puppy proof' your chosen room quite carefully. Some puppies are 'extreme chewers' and may destroy table legs, floor covering, and even the skirting boards which you thought were firmly attached to the wall. For this kind of puppy, you'll need a better solution. Which brings us to puppy pens.

## **Puppy Pens and Barriers**

In order to control the area to which your puppy has access, one solution is a sturdy puppy pen, like the one below.



These come in sections and can be assembled to fit most rooms. You will need one in addition to your crate. Aim for a pen like the one pictured above, or a 36-48" metal ex-pen. There is plenty of room here for the puppy to stretch his legs, and empty his bowels and bladder away from his sleeping quarters. This helps to preserve his natural instincts to keep his den clean. Later, your whole home will be his den, so we want to keep this instinct nice and strong.

## **Howling and Barking**

Puppies get lonely if left on their own for too long or too soon, and before they feel safe in your house. Puppies that are lonely will often howl and scream. Small puppies have surprisingly large voices. Unless your home is separated from your neighbors by a good 50 yards, they will be able to hear your puppy screaming. And they won't like it. The answer is to limit the time your puppy spends on his own to a reasonable and appropriate amount for his age. And to provide him with entertainment in the form of chew toys such as kongs.

## Monitoring

If you want to know whether your dog is potentially making a nuisance of himself to your neighbors or getting upset whilst you are away, you can consider investing in a monitoring system. The best pet monitors allow you to interact with your dog, as well as watch him. Pet Monitors use your WiFi signal to send video of your pet to you on your mobile device or to your computer at work. You can then make sure that your pet is okay at home. Some have motion detecting, so it only switches on when your dog is moving around. More comprehensive models even have a two-way microphone so that you can talk to your dog at home. Others are fully interactive with treat dispensers and even games.

## The First Few Weeks

Small puppies need help with toilet training and socialization, and can become very distressed if isolated for long periods of time in a strange place. Separation anxiety can be very hard to cope with and so it is important that a puppy is introduced to solitude in a gradual manner, and after he has settled in to his new home. This means you will need to arrange more help in the early months of your puppy's life than you will when he is older. If you work full-time when your puppy is very small, you will need someone else to be there in your place. This is both to establish good toileting habits, and to introduce him to the concept of learning to be alone for longer periods.

## Crate Training While You Work

You can still crate train your puppy when you work full time, but you'll need to do the training when you are at home to begin with. This is because early crate training involves leaving the puppy for very short periods of time, and because a small puppy can't hold his bladder for very long. So if you left him in a crate while you were at work all day, he'd soon learn to mess in his crate, which is

not what you want to happen. Start with crate training while you are home and at night, and as his bladder matures, introduce it while you are away at work – around 6-8 months, with someone coming over to let him out every 4 hours.

## Looking Ahead To Your Older Dog

It may be unavoidable in an emergency, but it is probably not reasonable to leave any dog alone indoors for the entire working day, on a regular basis. Depending on their temperament, some adult dogs may cope with the isolation, but many will become distressed, or bored, and get into mischief. And it is never pleasant being denied access to toilet facilities for hours on end. So, if you work full-time, you really do need to arrange for someone to visit your dog and take him out for some fresh air and exercise, at least once during the middle of the day. **For the rest of his life.** That is quite a commitment, and you need to consider this when arranging to buy a puppy. But what about when your puppy is still small? Just how long can a puppy be left alone?

## How Long Can A Puppy Be Left Alone?

Here are some guidelines to help you figure out what kind of help you are going to need at each stage.

**From 8-10 weeks of age:** The new puppy needs a lot of attention and companionship. For the first few days your home is a stranger's home. And he may be very upset to be left alone there. You need to either arrange for time off work to be with him for *much of the day*, or for someone else to look after him whilst you are at work. He needs to be taken out to his toilet area at *very frequent intervals*, and gradually accustomed to spending longer periods of time alone. He also needs to be taken on lots of outings to ensure he is properly socialized. This is vital, and difficult (if not impossible) to cram into evenings and weekends. If you leave him alone too soon and for too long, he may get very distressed.

**From 10-12 weeks of age:** Your puppy's bladder capacity is increasing but he may still be unable to last the four hours until you come home at lunch time. If you crate him, you'll need to arrange for someone to come in and let him out *mid-morning*. Or the equivalent for an afternoon or evening shift. If you leave him alone for four hours, you'll need a puppy pen to keep him safe and out of mischief. Attach the pen to his crate at one end with the door open, so that he can empty his bladder away from his sleeping quarters.

**From 3-6 months of age:** By the time he is six months old, your puppy will probably be able to last four hours without a wee, and he may be happy to sleep those four hours away in a large adult sized crate. It is important here to consider the journey time to and from work. People often say "I only work four hours" but in reality, the dog is left a good deal longer than that because of the travel time involved. If you are going to leave your dog any more than four hours, then he really would be better off with a puppy pen arrangement. Bear in mind that some six month old pups can jump quite high, so if he starts escaping the pen you will have to re-think. Bear in mind also, that this is the age at which some dogs become very destructive, especially if they are bored. So you probably will not want to give him the run of the house just yet. These are broad guidelines of course, and every dog is different.

Do be prepared to ask for support and advice from your vet, breeder and other experienced dog professionals, if you are concerned about how long to leave your puppy at any particular stage in his development.