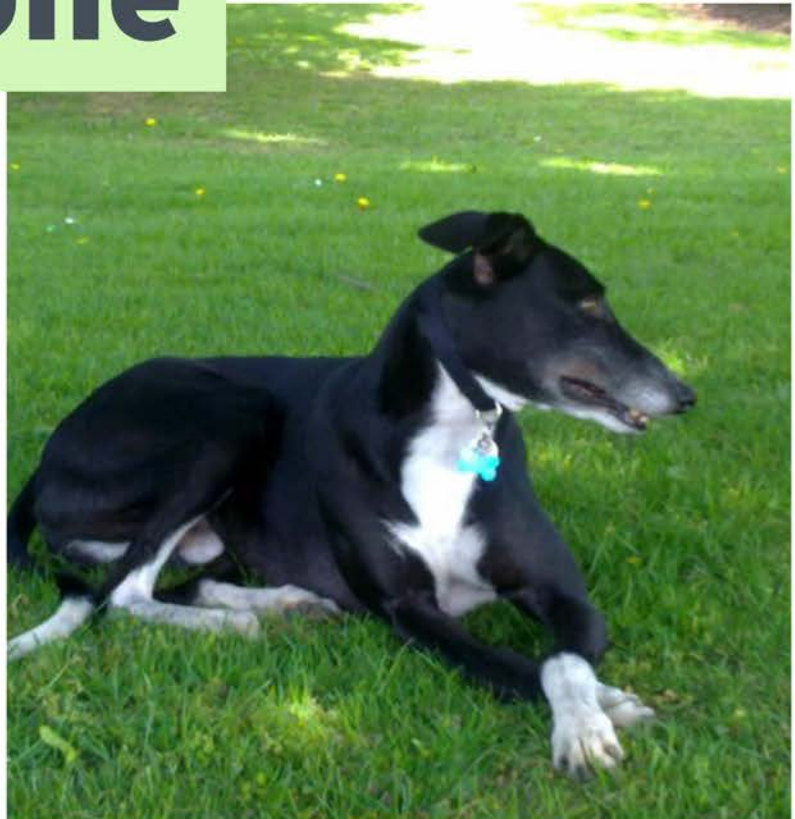




Spending

Time

Alone





Spending Time Alone

- During the initial adjustment period your hound will be getting used to you, the house, the car, the kids, the pets, the stairs, the beds — get the idea? He may show signs of stress such as pacing, heavy panting, listlessness, lack of interest in food and licking his paws. All these can be signs of anxiety and should settle in a few days.



- **Remember, be sympathetic with your greyhound's** situation — he has had a traumatic upheaval from his routine kennel life, and it may take him some time to adjust. **He's an intelligent dog, and he** will soon grasp what you expect of him. Your patience, love and understanding will help your greyhound – most of all **GIVE HIM TIME & SPACE!** Try not to overwhelm him with attention and toys and over-fussing.
- You'll also find you have a shadow. Your greyhound will follow you everywhere you go. To the bathroom, to the kitchen, to the garden, to the door when you go out. This will continue until he realises you are really his and aren't going to disappear.
- As your **greyhound becomes more secure with his surroundings and starts to trust you, you'll** see his personality emerging. He might steal your possessions and hide them, or smile at you



when you come home, or start demanding to be let on all soft things. These signs mean you now have a bona fide member of your household.

- **As a social species, it isn't surprising that most dogs are** happiest when they have company. Unfortunately, the majority of us have to leave our dogs alone on a regular basis due to work commitments. **Even if you're lucky enough not to have to**

leave your dog regularly, it is still important that you teach your dog to feel comfortable with short periods on their own, so that they will not panic should you ever have to leave them alone unexpectedly.

Introducing time alone

- **When you first bring your new dog home, you may notice that they're rather clingy!** It is totally normal for your newly adopted dog to follow you everywhere, and to show signs of worry when you leave the room. This is because they are in a new environment, feeling unsure and in need of extra social support. No need to panic - **this doesn't mean your dog is always going to** struggle with time alone! Remember, these dogs have lived with company all their lives in a kennels, trainers, rehoming staff and volunteer walkers, and to be left alone may be quiet



distressing for them initially. However, beyond late afternoon until the next morning, they are alone in kennels and do not show signs of separation anxiety overnight as a general rule, but then they do know there are other hounds around them.

- At this early stage we would advise simply letting your dog follow you around, **ignoring him** at this stage, for a few days. Humans, if anxious etc., will seek affection, cuddles, reassurance to help them deal with their anxiety. Counterintuitive as this will feel for you, you must try to ignore him. If you continue to cuddle, coo, or wrap yourself around him every time he whimpers, in a dog's language, your constant attention only serves to reinforce in him the belief that there is a need to be anxious and worried which is in fact a sign of stress. You should see this behaviour naturally start to decrease over time, as your dog starts to feel more secure and at home.
- Ideally, **we wouldn't advise introducing** extended periods of time alone until your dog has **started to get over this "clingy" phase. Whilst they are feeling unsure at home, they are more** likely to struggle with being left. This is why we advise taking an approximately two-weeks off work when you adopt, **as every dog settles at it's own pace.**
- When building up time alone, the idea is never to let your dog feel distressed. Only increase the amount of time alone if he is comfortable with the previous time period left. Start by leaving your dog only for a minute or so before returning. If he is occupied with his treat, you can leave him a bit longer but return as soon as he finishes it.
- To help build your dog's confidence and ability to cope when left alone, it is essential that you ignore all of your dog's attention seeking behaviour. This does not mean that you should ignore your dog completely and never give him attention; it means you initiate attention with your dog only when he is calm and quiet and when he comes to you. It is better not to seek out his attention during this settling in period.



Alone Training

This should be done at different times during the day so the dog does not associate a specific time of the day being left alone. This can begin from the time you bring a dog home, and can be repeated as many times as you can throughout the day. At each step your aim is to get the dog to ignore your actions & not associate being left with something terribly anxiety-provoking for him.

1. Act like you are leaving the home – pick your keys up, put them down & repeat many times throughout the days ahead. Just ignore the dog if he reacts to this action.
2. Once the dog ignores Step 1, move on to incorporate gathering your keys, with putting your coat on -Then take it all off and carry on as normal. Again Repeat.



3. Once the dog ignores Step 2, move on to going outside your property for a few seconds, then coming back in. Still ignoring the dog at every stage and avoid eye contact.

Do not say goodbye to the dog or give the dog any attention throughout this. Stay low-key and calm. Coming & going has to be treated as boring and natural.

4. Once your dog is comfortable at Step 3, start leaving the home for 3-5 minutes being sure to return before the dog becomes stressed.
5. Upon returning, totally ignore the dog for 2-3 minutes.
6. Take off your coat, put away your keys, relax. When the dog is calm and not focused on you, These behaviours show the dog your coming & going is nothing to get excited about.
7. **Repetition is the key here.** Follow this process daily, gradually increasing the time by a few minutes that you are away from the home.
8. Always try to return before your dog starts showing signs of distress. At any time the dog becomes stressed with your absence, step back by a few minutes on the next alone training session.
9. If the dog has an accident in the house or destroys bedding, do not scold the dog. Stay low key, clean up the mess and return to alone training.
10. Generally, when the dog can be alone for 30-50 minutes with no stress, the dog should be fine being alone for longer times.



Providing your dog with something to keep him **occupied whilst you're gone** is an option to consider. This could be a food filled toy, a long-lasting chew, a destruction box, or anything else that your dog enjoys. However, this is in the future **when the dog is settled, or this 'treat' situation could signal to** \hound it is about to be left, so best not to introduce these possible aids, until your dog is well used to being left.

Choose at least one treat which your dog absolutely loves and save this exclusively for when you leave him alone. This will help him to see time alone as a good thing! As you build up to longer periods alone, you may need to leave a number of enrichment items around the house to prevent your dog from getting bored. Be warned, not all hounds respond to **these type of 'distractions'** as they are not generally very active dogs and their habit is just to sleep, so do not worry if they do not respond to these. Their best enrichment is always going to be a regular walk to break up the day.

- It is normal for your dog to be unsettled when you first start leaving her, but signs that he is not comfortable and that you have moved onto a stage too far, includes barking, howling, excessive pacing or panting, toileting and destructive behaviour.



- Using a web cam which enables you to watch your dog in real time will make this process **much easier. You can watch how your dog behaves whilst you're gone, making sure you return** before he becomes distressed. You may be able to build up more quickly than expected if you can see that your dog appears comfortable. There are cameras designed specifically for this, but you could also leave a laptop running, with a video call connected to your phone.
- How quickly you can build time alone up will depend on your individual dog.

Top Tips



- Leaving a radio on when you leave can help sooth your dog, as well as drowning out any noises from outside which may cause him to feel unsettled. Classical music or audiobooks are ideal for this, as there are no adverts interrupting dozing.
- Many people prefer to restrict their dog to one room when leaving them alone. In which case, do not SHUT them in that room, as that will probably create separation anxiety. Just put their bed and feed them in that room so they become naturally accustomed to it. Most

dogs have no issue with this, but some struggle with not knowing what might be happening elsewhere in the house. If your dog is struggling with being left in one room, try giving them the run of the house, but ensuring they are not given access to bins, food, or anything else which may prove harmful

- Try not to make a big fuss of your dog before you leave, or when you return. This will make your **absence more obvious! You shouldn't totally ignore your dog either, as this will** be punishing for them – just act as you normally would!
- Never tell your dog off for any toileting or destructive behaviour they may have done whilst left alone. They will not connect the punishment with the behaviour they did whilst you were gone. Instead, they will start to feel worried about your return, making them even more distressed whilst **you're away. If your dog is struggling to get used to time alone, please get in touch** with us for support.

Helpful Information

Kennel Manager contact info: 01932251894 or carol@hershamhounds.org.uk

Other handy guides that can be found on the Wimbledon Greyhound Welfare website include:

- [Responsible Dog Ownership](#)
- [Bringing Your New Dog Home](#)
- [The First Night at Home](#)
- [Greyhounds and Children](#)
- [Greyhounds and Muzzles](#)
- [Toilet Training](#)
- [Greyhounds as Pets](#)
- [Issues Around Food Resources](#)
- [Sighthounds and Stairs](#)
- [Spending Time Alone](#)

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