

SEPARATION ANXIETY

Starter Kit

Your 30-Day Action Plan for a Calmer Dog

What's inside:

- How to confirm your dog actually has SA (not boredom)
- Week-by-week desensitization protocol
- Daily training log & progress tracker
- Pre-departure cue checklist
- When to talk to your vet about medication

Free resource from [PetCalmZone.com](https://www.PetCalmZone.com) — your guide to a calmer, happier dog.

HOW TO USE THIS KIT

Read this first.

This kit is designed to work over 30 days. Don't rush it. Separation anxiety training is slow by design — moving too fast is the most common reason it fails.

Week 1	Confirm the diagnosis. Set up your camera. Find your dog's threshold.
Week 2	Neutralize pre-departure cues. Begin sub-threshold practice absences.
Weeks 3–4	Extend duration gradually. Track progress daily. Adjust as needed.
Beyond	Generalize to new scenarios. Talk to your vet if progress stalls.

Key rule: Never let your dog cross threshold during a practice session. Below threshold = learning. Above threshold = the fear response deepens.

STEP
1

Confirm the Diagnosis

Before you train anything, you need to know what you're dealing with.

Separation anxiety and boredom look similar from the outside. The treatment is completely different. Don't guess — use a camera.

Signs of Separation Anxiety

Before you leave	Follows you room to room as departure approaches. Yawning, lip-licking, whale eye. Won't eat or engage with toys.
Within 5 min of leaving	Barking, howling, pacing. Scratching at doors or window frames. Drooling or panting.
When you return	Frantic, prolonged greeting. Accidents despite having bladder control when you're home.

SA vs. Boredom — Key Differences

Factor	Separation Anxiety	Boredom
Onset	Within 5 min	After 30–60+ min
Target	Exit points	Random items
Settles?	Rarely	Eventually
Eats alone?	Usually won't	Usually will

STEP
2

Find Your Dog's Threshold

This is the number everything else is built around.

Your dog's threshold is the moment anxiety tips into panic. Below it, learning is possible. Above it, the fear response deepens — and every episode makes the next one more likely.

How to Find It

- 1 Set up a camera in the room where your dog stays when alone.
- 2 Do a normal departure — same routine as always.
- 3 Leave for 30 minutes, then return and review the footage.
- 4 Find the timestamp of the first stress signal (panting, pacing, vocalization).
- 5 That duration is your threshold. Training starts at 20–30% of it.

My Dog's Threshold

Threshold duration: _____ min / sec

Training start (30% of threshold): _____ min / sec

STEP
3

Neutralize Pre-Departure Cues

Your dog starts panicking before you leave. Fix that first.

Dogs with separation anxiety learn that certain actions predict your departure — picking up keys, putting on shoes, reaching for your bag. By the time you walk out, they're already activated. These exercises break those associations.

Pre-Departure Cue Checklist

Practice each cue 15–20x per day WITHOUT leaving. Do this for 5–7 days before starting absence practice.

- Pick up your keys**
Pick them up, set them down. Walk away. Repeat.
- Put on shoes**
Put shoes on, sit on the couch for 2 min, take them off.
- Put on jacket/coat**
Put it on. Hang it back up. Don't leave.
- Pick up bag or purse**
Grab it, set it by the door, pick it up again. Put it away.
- Touch the door handle**
Grab handle, don't open. Walk back to the kitchen.
- Open the front door**
Open it, close it, walk back inside. Neutral re-entry.
- Step outside briefly**
Step out for 3 seconds, come back in. No drama.

Goal: Your dog should be able to watch you pick up your keys without any stress response. Once that's consistent, move to Step 4.

STEP
4

The Desensitization Protocol

Sub-threshold practice, repeated daily. This is the actual training.

Once your pre-departure cues are neutralized, begin practicing actual absences. Start well below threshold. Never rush the progression — setbacks reset progress.

Sample Week 1 Schedule (threshold = 2 min)

Day	Duration	Reps/Session	Sessions/Day
1–2	20–30 sec	8–10	3–4
3–4	45 sec	6–8	3
5–6	60 sec	5–6	3
7	75–90 sec	4–5	2–3

Rules During Practice

- Neutral exits and entries — no dramatic goodbyes, no long hellos.
- Vary session lengths — don't always increase. Mix in shorter ones.
- One variable at a time — don't change duration AND location on the same day.
- If your dog panics — you moved too fast. Drop back and rebuild from there.
- Cover real departures — arrange a sitter or doggy daycare if possible so panic doesn't undo the training.

Week 1 Tracker

Fill this in after each session. Tracking helps you spot plateaus before they cost you weeks.

Day	Duration practiced	Reps	Dog calm? (Y/N)	Notes
Day 1				
Day 2				
Day 3				
Day 4				
Day 5				
Day 6				
Day 7				

Week 1 observations:

Medication isn't a last resort. For many dogs, it's what makes training possible.

A dog in full panic cannot learn. Medication lowers the physiological ceiling so training actually sticks. If your dog's anxiety is moderate-to-severe, adding medication is often the fastest path to real progress — not a sign of giving up.

Signs medication may help:

- Training has been consistent for 6–8 weeks with no threshold improvement.
- Your dog crosses threshold within seconds of departure, not minutes.
- Physiological signs are severe: heavy drooling, self-injury, unable to eat for hours.
- Multiple desensitization attempts have stalled at the same point.

What to say at the vet:

"My dog shows signs of separation anxiety — destructive behavior, excessive vocalization, and can't settle when I leave. I'd like to discuss whether medication could be part of the plan alongside behavior modification."

Common medications your vet may discuss:

Medication	Type	Timeline	Best for
Fluoxetine (Reconcile)	SSRI	4–6 weeks	Moderate-severe SA
Clomipramine (Clomicalm)	TCA	3–4 weeks	Moderate SA
Trazodone	Off-label	1–2 hours	Situational / bridge

KEEP LEARNING

More resources at PetCalmZone.com

The Complete Guide to Dog Separation Anxiety petcalmzone.com/complete-guide-dog-separation-anxiety

How to Train a Dog With Separation Anxiety petcalmzone.com/how-to-train-dog-separation-anxiety

Best Anxiety Medications for Dogs petcalmzone.com/best-anxiety-medications-dogs

Best Products for Dogs With Separation Anxiety

petcalmzone.com/best-products-dog-separation-anxiety

This guide is for informational purposes only and does not constitute veterinary advice. Always consult a licensed veterinarian for medical decisions regarding your dog.