

Separation Anxiety: Tricks and Tips to Teach your Greyhound that it's OK to be Alone!

Separation anxiety (SA) is the one thing that is almost impossible for us to test for, as all our foster homes have other dogs. When we are placing an only dog, all we have is “our best guess” based on the dog’s behavior and interaction with the other dogs in the foster home to help us decide whether or not that dog will make a good only dog.

Because greyhounds live in a kennel environment, the adjustment for them is sometimes a bigger challenge for them than other breeds. The good news is that with some time and patience, most dogs can be taught that it is ok to be alone. Below are some of the things that have worked for us.

1. Turn on the radio or TV. This is the easiest and usually most effective thing to try. A lot of the kennels play country music.
2. Get on a schedule and stick to it. Your greyhound is used to a schedule; he likes to know what comes next. Once he knows the routine of his new environment, he will be less anxious.
3. Give him tasty treats that he ONLY gets when you leave and he is crated. A KONG toy filled with treats and peanut butter and frozen overnight, shank bones (raw, never cooked), a plastic soda bottle (lid off) with kibble or treats, a favorite chew toy. All these should be left in the crate and used only when you leave. This helps him associate your leaving with getting something yummy that he really wants. Another trick I’ve recently stumbled across is laying Milk bones crosswise on the top of the crate so the dog has to knock them through the slats of the crate with his nose to win the treat. There are other commercial “puzzle”

type toys where the dog has to figure out how to get the treats out, these provide a distraction and entertainment while you are gone.

4. Have you seen your dog looking in the mirror and trying to interact with the dog he sees? Use that to trick him into thinking there is another dog right next to him by putting a full length mirror right next to his crate.
5. In some situations, a Dog Appeasing Pheromone (DAP) collar or diffuser may help calm your dog. The diffusers usually last about a month and need to be plugged into an outlet close to the crate.
6. The physical location of the crate can also be a factor. Try it near a window, or away from the window. If it's in a room you don't use unless you're leaving, you may have to move it to an area the dog hangs out in when you're home. Try it against the wall, and out in the open.
7. Some dogs like their crate to be cave like. Try covering it with a blanket, leaving the end open so the dog can still see out.
8. A piece of clothing or towel (used, not laundered) with your scent on it placed in the crate may comfort the dog while you are gone.
9. Exercise. Obviously exercise won't cure SA, but a long walk or run before leaving for the day could help your dog relax and rest while you are gone.
10. If your dog seems to hate being crated, don't let him fool you. He's been crated at the track and it IS what he's used to. Try crate training while you're home, leaving him in for a few minutes and rewarding good behavior. If the crate just won't work for your dog, try confining him to one room with a baby gate (closed doors just heighten the anxiety) so he can still see out but has restricted access to the rest of the house. If you want to give him unrestricted access to the entire house while you are gone, a muzzle and belly band (for the boys) can be used to curb unwanted chewing and marking.

11. Get another dog. Radical, I know. Consider fostering, that way your dog has the benefit of another dog in the house, but you aren't making a lifetime commitment to a second dog.

Please keep in mind that the same thing or combination of things doesn't work for every dog. AND, nothing happens overnight. It will take a little time and finesse to figure out what works for you and your dog.