



How to cope when you're stuck at home

The current coronavirus restrictions mean that you're having to spend much more time at home. Your dog will be generally delighted at having you around more – but it's worth stopping to reflect on how best to manage this phase so that both of you can enjoy it to the full, while also making sure that returning to normal afterwards won't produce any unpleasant shocks.

Extra time together means lots more cuddles – but it can also highlight problems and issues you might not have even noticed previously. Here are some tips to help you both.

Routines rule

All animals (and most humans) like the predictable nature of a regular routine. If you can, continue to feed your dog at the same times, walk at the normal time, and do anything else that was part of your regular pattern. Continue to leave your pet alone (e.g. in another room) when you would normally do so at least some of the time. It's not worth the risk of creating separation problems when they can be so easily prevented.

Separate spaces

Having their human around all the time can mean too much of a good thing, so give your pet their own space, such as a bed or crate in a quiet corner, behind a barrier if need be, where they can go and relax when they need to. Children can be too much for some dogs if they are on the go all the time, so having a place where the dog can retreat to, or be placed in if they are getting too over-aroused, will prove its worth.

Promote play

Play provides your dog with an outlet for normal behaviour as well as strengthening their relationship with you. Whether it's fetching a ball or playing tug, make time to play for a few minutes a couple of times a day. Build play into your training sessions too to make them more fun.

Training tricks

Being at home and having more time means you can finally do all that training you always meant to do but never got round to. Set aside a few minutes each day to revise your Perfect Pet games, try out the Challenges in the Coronavirus Canine Challenge Facebook group, or teach your dog to help you with some household tasks. The possibilities are almost endless – ask us if you need ideas.

Feed Fascinatingly

Ditch the food bowl! Food puzzle toys, snuffle mats, scatter feeding, food trails, filled Kongs – all of these provide a great way to make mealtimes more interesting, longer-lasting and more satisfying for your dog. Download our mind stimulation games sheet for even more ideas.

Banish Bad Behaviours

Spending more time at home may mean that some behaviours your dog does that you had previously not noticed or ignored, start to irritate and annoy you. This is the ideal time to do something about it. We're offering a range of telephone and online consultation options to help you, so book one when you need. All details are on the website, www.downdog.co.uk/Online.

This is also a good time to learn more about your dog. Our Canine Communication and Behaviour Basics courses are aimed at interested dog owners and potential dog professionals – check them out.