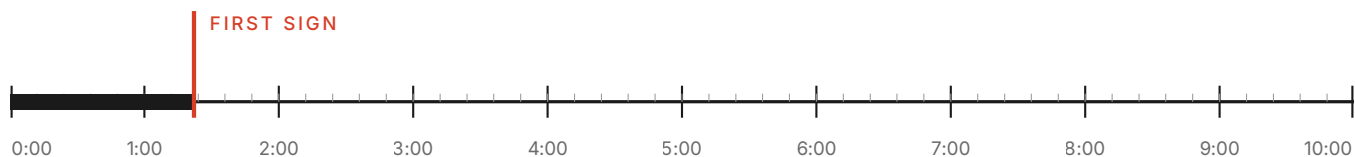


FREE KIT · STEP-BACK LADDER

The 10-Minute Baseline Kit

Film your dog for up to 10 minutes and find out how long they stay relaxed when you leave.

Five pages for owners whose dog barks, howls or destroys things when left alone. Check the red flags and rule out the lookalikes. Film one short baseline. Then write down the number that any practice plan has to start below.



Watch live. Come back at the **first stress sign** or at 10 minutes, whichever comes first.

Organized by Paul Michael. I'm not a dog trainer or a vet. I put this together from published guidance by the ASPCA, Arizona Humane Society and certified separation-anxiety trainers.

How to use this kit

Five pages, done in order. You end with your dog's baseline in writing.

- 1 Check the red flags (01, p. 2). Ticked any box? Show this kit to your vet before you film.
- 2 Do the lookalike check (02, p. 3). Separation anxiety has lookalikes, and they need different help.
- 3 Read the stress signs out loud (04, p. 5). Then film the baseline with the script (03, p. 4).
- 4 Fill in the baseline log (05, p. 6) straight after.

"The main rule is to plan your absences to be shorter than the time it takes for your dog to become upset." ASPCA. This kit finds that time.

HAVE READY

- ☐ Two devices: one to film, one to watch live
- ☐ A timer and a pen
- ☐ Printed: 04, p. 5 and 05, p. 6

I'm not a dog trainer or a veterinarian, and this isn't veterinary advice. The Step-Back Ladder helps you organize a practice plan and a Cover Plan you can follow and take to your vet or a certified trainer. See your vet first to rule out medical causes. If your dog is injuring themselves, trying to escape through windows or doors, or not eating when alone, talk to your vet or a veterinary behaviorist now. Moderate and severe cases do best with a professional. ASPCA recommends working with a qualified behavior professional (and a vet for any medication).

WHAT YOU'LL HAVE

A filmed baseline, and how long your dog stayed relaxed after the door closed. Keep it for any practice plan, or to show a trainer.

CALL A PRO IF

Your dog hurts themselves, tries to escape through doors or windows, or won't eat when alone

WHO MADE THIS

Organized by Paul Michael. I'm not a dog trainer or a vet. I put this together from published guidance by the ASPCA, Arizona Humane Society and certified separation-anxiety trainers.

DRAWN FROM

ASPCA, Separation Anxiety. Arizona Humane Society, Training Tips.

Red flags and the vet check

Do this before you film anything. Some dogs need a professional first.

TICK ANY THAT APPLY

- ☐ My dog has hurt themselves when alone: broken teeth, cut or scraped paws, damaged nails
- ☐ My dog tries to escape: digging or chewing at doors, windows or crate bars
- ☐ My dog won't eat when left alone, even food they love
- ☐ My dog has accidents indoors even when I'm home, or leaks urine while asleep
- ☐ My dog takes medication, or has a health change I haven't asked my vet about

Ticked any box? Don't start practice sessions on your own yet. Call your vet or a veterinary behaviorist and show them this page. You can still line up someone to stay with your dog when you're out. That asks nothing of your dog.

VET CHECK

VET'S NAME AND PHONE

CHECK BOOKED FOR

MEDICATIONS MY DOG TAKES

WHAT I'LL ASK ABOUT

WHY THIS PAGE

ASPCA lists incontinence, other medical problems and some medications as causes of house soiling. Rule these out before behavior work. Escape attempts can end in injury.

CALL A PRO IF

You ticked any box on this page

Your dog's behavior changed suddenly

You want to ask about medication. Only your vet or a veterinary behaviorist can advise on it.

DONE WHEN

Every box is ticked or left blank on purpose. If your vet hasn't seen your dog about this, you've booked a check.

DRAWN FROM

ASPCA, Separation Anxiety (medical rule-outs, self-injury, medication).

Separation anxiety, or a lookalike?

One question sorts most of it: does it happen when you're home too?

WHAT YOU SEE	ALSO WHEN I'M HOME?	IF YES, IT MAY BE
Accidents indoors	☐ yes ☐ no	Incomplete house training, or a medical cause
Peeing during greetings or play	☐ yes ☐ no	Submissive or excitement urination
Small amounts of pee on walls or furniture legs	☐ yes ☐ no	Urine marking
Chewing and digging	☐ yes ☐ no	Juvenile destruction, common in young dogs
Barking at sounds or passers-by	☐ yes ☐ no	Barking at triggers
Getting into things, but looks relaxed	☐ yes ☐ no	Boredom

SIGNS THAT POINT TO SEPARATION ANXIETY

- ☐ Gets upset while I get ready to leave
- ☐ Starts barking or shows other distress within minutes of me leaving
- ☐ Chews, digs or scratches around doors and windows
- ☐ Greets me as if I've been gone for years
- ☐ None of it happens while I'm there

Mostly yes in the middle column? Talk to your vet before you use this guide. It may not be separation anxiety.
Mostly no, with boxes ticked below? Go on to the film.

WHY THIS PAGE

ASPCA lists these lookalikes to rule out first. A practice plan won't help a dog who is bored or not yet house trained.

CALL A PRO IF

You ticked yes for accidents. Ask your vet first.

You can't tell which column fits. Your vet or a behavior professional can watch your film.

DONE WHEN

Every row has a yes or a no.

DRAWN FROM

ASPCA, Separation Anxiety (symptoms and other behavior problems to rule out).

Film the baseline

One short film, watched live. It shows how long your dog stays relaxed after the door closes.

SET UP

- ☐ Your dog had exercise earlier today and is settled
- ☐ A phone or laptop records the area by the door your dog waits at
- ☐ A second phone shows you that camera live (a video call between your two devices works)
- ☐ A timer, and the stress signs from 04, p. 5 next to you

FILM

- 1** Press record. Do your normal leaving routine: shoes, coat, bag, keys. Watch your dog the whole time.
- 2** Stress signs during the routine? Stop. Put things down and stay home. Write on 05, p. 6 which step set it off. That's your result.
- 3** If not, leave through your usual door with no big goodbye. Start the timer as the door closes.
- 4** Watch live. Go back in at the first stress sign or at 10:00, whichever comes first.
- 5** Come in calmly. Say hello, then ignore your dog until they're calm. Stop the recording.
- 6** Fill in 05, p. 6 now. Then watch the film once more. If a sign started earlier than you saw live, use the earlier time.

This is the only time the guide asks you to go up to your dog's first sign. Every practice absence after this stays below it. Film one baseline, not several.

WHY THIS PAGE

ASPCA's main rule: plan absences shorter than the time it takes your dog to get upset. You can't plan that until you know the time.

When you watch live, you go back at the first sign. You don't find out later.

CALL A PRO IF

You ticked a red flag on 01, p. 2. Skip the film and see your vet instead.

Your dog panics within seconds, tries to escape or hurts themselves on the film

DONE WHEN

You have a time to the first sign, or a note that signs began during the routine. You've saved the film.

DRAWN FROM

ASPCA, Separation Anxiety (the main rule, calm exits and entries, exercise before leaving). Film format: this kit's own design. The 10-minute cap is this kit's default.

Stress signs

What to watch for on the film and in every session. One sign is enough.

Tick a sign when you see it. Write the time on the line, in minutes : seconds after the door closed.

ASPCA'S LIST OF STRESS SIGNS

☐	Dilated pupils	AT _____
☐	Panting	AT _____
☐	Yawning	AT _____
☐	Salivating	AT _____
☐	Trembling	AT _____
☐	Pacing	AT _____
☐	Exuberant greeting when you return	AT _____

ALSO WATCH FOR, WHEN YOUR DOG IS ALONE

☐	Whining, barking or howling	AT _____
☐	Chewing, digging or scratching at doors or windows	AT _____
☐	Trying to escape	AT _____
☐	Peeing or pooping	AT _____
☐	Drooling, or sweaty paw prints	AT _____
☐	Leaving a food toy they'd normally eat	AT _____

If you see a sign, the session already went past your dog's limit. That's information, not failure. Write it down. The Step-Back Rule (in the full guide) decides what happens next.

WHY THIS PAGE

ASPCA says knowing when to add time alone "can be very difficult, and many pet parents make errors." Its answer is to watch for these signs.

ASPCA notes that highly anxious dogs usually won't eat when their people aren't home. So an untouched food toy counts.

CALL A PRO IF

You see escape attempts or self-injury

Signs show up at every length you try, even a second or two

DONE WHEN

You've read the list out loud once, and it's printed by the door.

DRAWN FROM

ASPCA, Separation Anxiety (stress signs, symptoms, food toys). Arizona Humane Society, Training Tips (whining, howling, sweating from paws).

Baseline log

Fill this in right after the film, while it's fresh.

DOG'S NAME

DATE AND TIME OF DAY

EXERCISE EARLIER TODAY (WHAT, HOW LONG)

DOOR USED

CAMERA POSITION

IF SIGNS STARTED BEFORE YOU LEFT

THE ROUTINE STEP THAT SET IT OFF (SHOES, KEYS, COAT...)

IF YOU GOT OUT THE DOOR

TIME TO FIRST SIGN

_____ : _____
 minutes seconds

After the door closed. No sign at all in 10 minutes? Write 10 : 00 and tick here ☐

FIRST SIGN I SAW

OTHER SIGNS, IN ORDER

WHAT MY DOG DID WHEN I CAME BACK

SECOND WATCH: DID A SIGN START EARLIER? NEW TIME

WHY THIS PAGE

One number decides your starting step. Write it down tonight so you don't round it up tomorrow.

CALL A PRO IF

The first sign came within a few seconds of the door closing, and it was intense

Your dog tried to escape or hurt themselves

DONE WHEN

You've filled in the time to first sign, or the routine step that set things off. Next: your starting step (in the full guide).

DRAWN FROM

ASPCA, Separation Anxiety (stress signs, exercise). Log format: this kit's own design.

Your number, turned into a plan

The baseline shows roughly where your dog's limit is. The Step-Back Ladder shows you what to do with it, every day.

YOUR NUMBER

Copy it from 05, p. 6. In any plan you follow, every practice absence starts below it.

TIME TO FIRST SIGN

DATE FILMED

THE STEP-BACK LADDER · \$27

A plan-first guide. Page 1 is tonight's plan. It turns your baseline into a starting step, then adds:

- 1 Find your starting step.** These five pages, plus the starting-step worksheet: how long to step out the door at your first session, and where.
- 2 Cover every absence.** The Cover Plan, so the absences you can't skip don't undo the practice.
- 3 Climb with one rule.** The Step-Back Rule card, a four-rep session template, a pre-departure cue planner and a two-week schedule.
- 4 Know when to bring in a pro.** Who to call, what to bring, and a one-page summary for them.

Get it from the link in the email that brought you this kit. 14-day refund, no questions asked. Reply to your receipt email and you'll have your money back.

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CALL A PRO IF

Your film showed escape attempts or self-injury

Signs started before you'd even left

KEPT ON FILE

Keep the film and 05, p. 6. You'll use them in the guide, or with a professional.

DRAWN FROM

Sources: ASPCA, Separation Anxiety. Arizona Humane Society, Training Tips (Shoshi Parks, CSAT).