

Dog Left Home Alone

A frustrated dog chews and scratches when left tethered in the kitchen.

By September Morn

Q. We leave my dog at home when we go to school and my parents go to work. We leave him on a leash in the kitchen with his food and water bowls filled, a blanket, and some toys. We let him out to do his business as soon as we get home. Sometimes when we come home we notice that he has chewed on the door and scraped the paint off, or scratched the walls. Why does he do this?

A. Dogs chew and scratch things for different reasons, but when they do it while tethered it usually indicates frustration. Your dog may sometimes need to do his business before you get home, and having to hold it until you're there to let him outside may make him antsy... so he chews. Or he may simply be bored with being home alone and crave more exercise than he can get when tethered ... so he chews.

Here are some possible solutions that will relieve his boredom, give him some healthy exercise, and provide a potty break during the day: Ask a dog-loving neighbor to drop by during the day and let your dog out to eliminate and get a bit of exercise. You could offer to do chores for that neighbor in exchange for the help with your dog. Hire a pet sitter to walk your dog during the day and give him a chance to eliminate if he needs to. Fence part of your yard and install a pet door your dog can use while you're gone. Send your pooch to doggie daycare two or three days a week, where he can exercise and practice social skills with other friendly dogs.