

Home Alone *Observation* Checklist

Ever wondered what really happens after the door closes? Thirty minutes of video tells you more than any guess. This checklist helps you watch calmly, tick what you see, and get a simple read on what your dog may need next.

Before you film

1. Pick a normal day. Your dog has had a walk, a potty break and some time to rest.
2. Set up a phone, laptop or pet camera so it sees the door and your dog's usual spot. Plug it in, and check the angle.
3. Leave a stuffed food toy or a small chew, as you normally would.
4. Leave the way you usually leave: keys, shoes, door. Don't make a big goodbye.
5. Stay away for about **30 minutes**, unless the red flags below show up. Come back calmly.

Stop early and go back if...

Many cameras let you watch live. Come back right away if you see your dog:

- hurting themselves (bleeding gums, torn nails, chewing their own body)
- trying hard to get out through a door, window or crate
- in nonstop panic with no letting up

If this happens, skip the rest of the test. That is already your answer: **please talk to your vet.**

How to watch the video

1. Watch it later, when you're relaxed, with this sheet and a pen.
2. Go through it in three windows: **the first 5 minutes**, **minutes 5 to 15** and **minutes 15 to 30**.
3. On page 2, tick a box when you see a sign in that window. You don't need to count how often, just whether it happened.
4. Write the minute your dog first lay down and relaxed, if they did.
5. Then add up your score on page 3.

A little fuss right after you leave is common, and doesn't mean something is wrong. What matters most is **what happens after the first few minutes**: does your dog settle, or does the stress keep going or grow?

What I saw on *the video*

Tick each sign you see in each time window.

SIGN	FIRST 5 MIN 1 POINT EACH	MIN 5 TO 15 2 POINTS EACH	MIN 15 TO 30 3 POINTS EACH
Pacing or circling walking the same path, can't settle	☐	☐	☐
Whining, barking or howling more than a few short sounds	☐	☐	☐
Scratching or chewing at doors or windows or at the crate door	☐	☐	☐
Drooling or heavy panting when it isn't hot and they haven't been active	☐	☐	☐
Destroying things near the exits door frames, blinds, the mat by the door	☐	☐	☐
Peeing or pooping inside when they're normally house-trained	☐	☐	☐
Ignoring the food toy or chew won't touch food they usually love	☐	☐	☐
Watching the door, can't look away sits or stands at the door, on alert	☐	☐	☐
Shaking, hiding or tucked tail	☐	☐	☐
Settling (good signs, no points)			
Ate or worked on the food toy	☐	☐	☐
Lay down and relaxed, or slept first time it happened: minute ____	☐	☐	☐
Points in each window	----	----	----

Red flags (tick any you saw)

- ☐ **Hurt themselves**
bleeding mouth or paws, broken nails, licking or chewing their own body raw
- ☐ **Tried to escape**
broke or bent a crate, damaged a door or window frame, got out
- ☐ **Nonstop distress**
panic for most of the 30 minutes, with no letting up
- ☐ **A sudden change**
this is new, especially in an older dog, or came with other changes (sleep, appetite, confusion)
- ☐ **Possible medical signs**
accidents, vomiting, diarrhea, limping or signs of pain, even when you're home

Total score: ____ (add the three windows). Notes: _____

What your score *may mean*

Use your ticks and total score to find the closest match. It's a starting point for your next step, not a diagnosis.

First: any red flag ticked? → Talk to your vet

If you ticked even one red flag, please talk to your vet before you start any training. Pain, illness and some age-related changes can look just like separation stress, and some dogs need medical support to be able to learn. Bring the video with you. It helps a lot.

0 to 6 points

Likely mild, or boredom

Signs mostly in the first 5 minutes, then your dog ate, explored or lay down.

Next: more exercise and sniffing before you leave, a food toy every time, and keep departures low-key.

7 to 14 points

Some separation-related stress

Signs carried past the first 5 minutes, but your dog settled at some point.

Next: short, calm practice absences that stay below the point where stress starts, and avoid long stretches alone for now.

15 points or more

Likely separation-related distress

Stress kept going or grew after 15 minutes, and/or your dog never settled or ate.

Next: cover the long hours (a walker, daycare, a friend) while you train in very small steps. Consider a chat with your vet too.

Two quick checks that change the picture

- **Did your dog settle before minute 15?** That's a good sign, even if the start was noisy.
- **Did signs start before you even left?** (shoes, keys, bag) Then the routine itself is part of the stress, and making those cues boring will help.

Keep this video

Repeat the test in 2 to 4 weeks, with the same setup. Comparing the two videos is the clearest way to see real progress, and small changes count: settling a few minutes sooner is a win.

This checklist is general educational information, not veterinary advice, diagnosis or treatment. Every dog is different and no result is guaranteed. If you're worried about your dog's health or safety, talk to your veterinarian.

With care, the Alone & Okay team · aloneandokay.com