

Change the Routine: Back to School



You know what it's like when you have been away on vacation every day and it's been a real blast. You get home, and suddenly being back seems flat, even a little depressing.

Well, after a long summer of fun with the kids home and family and friends coming and going, when school starts again, and things go quiet in the home, our pets also experience that “flat feeling.”

“It's very real,” says behaviorist Professor Nicholas Dodman from the Small Animal Behavior Clinic at the Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts University in Massachusetts. “And, depending on your dog's or cat's personality, some can suffer from depression and separation anxiety.”

Firstly it's important to try and keep to your pet's general routine the same during the summer break so that it's not too much of a downer when things go quiet. The first quick fix to trying to get your pet out of the doldrums is to keep them busy with lots of extra love and attention and, of course, fun and games. This way it will be easier for them to adapt to the change in routine.

You can easily get your dog back into “perked up mode” by starting every day with an early morning walk before you go to work. This way, when you walk out to door and head to the office, she will be tired from the activity and happy to snooze.

There are lots of lovely distraction toys that can be stuffed with peanut butter or [treats](#)

along with some really great puzzle games to keep dogs both mentally and physically engaged.

Consider arranging play dates with a neighbor's dog or organize more regular outings to the dog park. It may even be worth your while to sign your dog up for a day or two at a local doggie day care to give him the opportunity to play with his doggie peers.

Cats also need both mental and physical stimulation on a daily basis. And again, it's a good idea to try and keep their routine intact over the summer too. When you have your coffee before work in the morning, engage your cat in a game with a [laser toy](#). They will enjoy chasing the beam. But remember, it's not fair play, so be sure to give a treat at the end of the game. Or, time the game to occur before you put down your cat's breakfast. There are also lots of lovely battery operated toys that can be set to engage your cat two or three times a day while you are out.

Move the cat tree or kitty condo to a position where it overlooks your garden or a street. Cats love observing what's going on around them.

And if you are walking the dog, consider getting a pet stroller and taking your cat along on the outing too. Felines enjoy the sight and sounds of the outdoors.

For pets that are really stressed when they are left home alone for long stretches, consider putting on a [SENTRY Calming Collar](#) infused with the same pheromones a mother dog or [cat](#) produces to calm her young. They are available for both dogs and cats. Also consider the [SENTRY Calming Diffuser](#) which emits [pheromones](#) and has a pleasant lavender chamomile fragrance. One diffuser can cover an area of up to 215 square feet and last for one month.

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