Preparing Your Pet for Your Return to Campus

Returning to campus will likely mean a significant change to your pet’s schedule, and no matter how much time you have to prepare, this is likely to cause some anxiety for both of you. The good news is our pets are resilient, and will adjust to the new routine with a little help.

Adjust your routine before you go back to campus.

1. Start leaving the house more often, for gradually longer periods of time.
   - This gets your pet used to the idea that when you go away, you always come back.
2. Take your work bag, wear your work outfit, or any other recognizable cue when you leave the house on these trips.
3. Adjust your pet’s walking/play and meal times to the new expected schedule.
   - Resist the urge to take them for a walk/play with them during times you’ll normally be at work.
4. If your dog was previously crate trained, get them back in that habit.

Help relieve your pet’s anxiety

Our pets can learn our routine and signs of our imminent departure, and can anticipate what comes next. Whining, pouting, jumping at the door or blinds after you leave, aside from making us feel guilty, can also mean our animals don’t have a way to self soothe. Destructive behaviors (chewing on doors, clawing furniture, etc.) can be a physical manifestation of stress, but it could also mean your pet is bored.

1. Take your pet for a walk or play with them before you leave for work to release pent up energy and tire them out.
2. Give them a puzzle toy or exciting new chew toy (that won’t break into dangerously small pieces) to entertain them.
3. Turn on Pet TV (available online for free) to keep them relaxed.
4. If letting your pet roam free isn’t working, consider crate training. Crates act as den for dogs, creating an environment they can feel safe and secure in.
5. If you live in an apartment or condo, check in with your neighbors to let them know you’ll be going back to the office. Ask them to let you know if your pet is being excessively vocal – this can let you know if your pet is having trouble adjusting, and also helps you maintain good neighborly relations.
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These aren't working and my pet is super stressed!

1. Consider having a dog walker come during the day if your dog is especially high energy, or enroll them in doggy daycare where they can romp and socialize.
2. If your dog isn’t adjusting to their old routine, or if you got a new rescue who isn’t handling the transition well, dog training may be a good idea.
   - Not only can training boost a dog’s confidence, but a trainer can also help you counter-condition your dog’s anxiety response to being left alone.

The first week you return to work is the toughest, but as your new routine becomes a habit, both of you will feel more comfortable. That reunion at the end of the day is all the more sweet as the anticipation of seeing each other again grows!