



## **BACK TO SCHOOL TIPS....FOR PETS**

Stores are full of notebooks, backpacks, and pens. Lunch boxes and snack packs are flying off the shelves. It's still summer, but it's already here, school is now in session!



Whether you are a full-time student, a parent of school-aged children, or taking classes while working, chances are, you are getting ready for September

and a big change in schedule. As you make plans for back-to-school, don't forget to include the dog.

Busy days with early departures and late returns seem really busy for you between conferences with teachers, extracurricular activities, and evenings of homework, it seems like you can't get a break. But for your dog, all of that means long hours alone and little time to play and exercise with you. Here are some tips that will help you take care of your dog's needs and enjoy the precious time that you have to spend together.

- Start your day with a little love. Despite your foggy head, skip the "snooze" button and squeeze in a quick scratch and snuggle. This will help you both start the day on the right foot – what can be better than some unconditional love first thing in the morning?
- An early morning walk goes a long way. You don't have to go on an epic hike, but a quick potty break with some fresh air will help you both wake up.
- Enjoy breakfast together. Feed your dog before you sit down, and chat with her while you eat. Dogs don't care what you're saying, they just love to hear your voice.
- Don't make a big deal of your departure. Fussy departures can exacerbate separation anxiety. A

cheerful "see you later" from family members without a guilty, drawn-out goodbye will make it easier on her when you leave.

- Go for another walk. When you get home, take the time to go for a walk. If you have family of an age that they can help, you can tag-team dinner prep and walk time. A walk will help you both wind down from your day and give your dog some much-needed exercise.
- Let your dog hang out with you during homework time. Any contact with you is good for your dog, even if you are focused on statistics while she chews her toys.
- Include your dog in dinner time. Feeding at dinner time may reduce begging, and is better than sending her away during the precious hours that you are home with her.
- Make time to play. You both deserve some fun time in your day!

Finally, you can't be perfect. There will be extenuating circumstances, like soccer tournaments or midterm exams that will leave your dog out. In these cases, consider a dog walker or "doggy daycare." This could be anything from a professional service, to asking a family member, to hiring a responsible neighborhood teen to come in and take your dog for a walk or spend some time playing. This will make sure your dog's needs are being met, even when you can't be there yourself.

Taking good care of your dog is just part of being a responsible pet owner, even when you're busy. Since your dog is a valued family member, doing things together will be an enjoyable break from your crazy life and adult obligations!