

## Ease pets back into school

Summer is great for the whole family with its picnics, beach walks, water-park visits and fishing trips. Maybe summer at your house means kids home all day every day, and the kitchen and TV room constantly bustling with teenagers or toddlers. Pets love summer with the family at home more and everyone more willing to go outside and relax inside. But most pets don't keep track of the calendar and don't realize that after Labour Day every thing will change back again and they will no longer have family members hanging out and entertaining them all day.

In fact, many of them get depressed and some of them get mad and destructive.

Now is the perfect time to taper your pets off the summer play hours and gradually get them used to the fall routine. Make sure you leave them for

short stints every day and gradually increase the duration of their home-alone times and the number of times they are alone each day.

As the British say, "start as you mean to go on" with routines like exercise, walks, feeding, litter box, and kids' pet-related chores. Set up a duty wheel now and get the rewards and routines working before Labour Day comes and goes.

Pets can be part of the rewards as well as the duties. For example, nothing makes a kid prouder than to show off dog tricks or cat manners at school with his own special pet! A young kid may be willing to help with walks or grooming if a parent facilitates a pet visit for show-and-tell at school or takes the child along to the vet when the pets need exams.

Kids love going to the vet, and they love pet store

shopping too so include these as both chores and rewards. An older kid might scoop the poop if he gets to borrow the car and take the dog and younger kids for ice cream.

Your teens may not know that pets are great for dating. Girls can meet other kids without being in danger if they go for a walk with a big protective dog. Curfew can be extended for such walks as incentive. And boys will find it easier to meet girls if they have something cute and fluffy on the end of a leash while they troll the block.

Most cats and dogs do well on their own for hours a day since they sleep a lot and don't require that much from us.

But they do require their needs be met at a time they can count on. Making them guess, will she walk me, won't she walk me? or will he change the litter? is not fair. Your pets will get anxious and then destructive and you can avoid all that just by creating routines they can depend on.

Morning is the best time to exercise a dog who will be left all day.

Leave him tired and satisfied and you'll come home to a calm and clean house.

With cats, cuddle time and playtime should occur at a routine time they can count on especially if the cat is particularly feisty or wild.

Make sure you initiate play and show pets when it is playtime with key signals like words and special toys. Remember to give them their play and cuddles, runs and walks without the pets needing to remind you.

If they have to remind you they'll do it in animal ways, like scratching, pawing, barking, and messing.

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**DEBORAH WOLFE**  
**CAMP GOOD DOG**