



Noise fears

Research suggests that fear of noises is very common in the dog population, with almost half of owners reporting that their dogs show signs of fear or anxiety in response to loud, unpredictable noises like fireworks, thunderstorms, and gun shots.

Some dogs may show obvious signs that they are scared, such as hiding, trying to escape, vocalising or toileting. Others may show more subtle signs, such as being clingy, not wanting to eat, pacing, salivating, shaking or lip licking.

Dogs have extremely sensitive hearing and noises that seem to come out of nowhere, like fireworks, can be incredibly distressing. There are steps you can take to help though, and the sooner you start preparing your dog, the better!

If your dog is already frightened of loud noises, talk to your vet about a referral to an accredited behaviourist, who will create a tailored plan to support you and your dog. It's important to let your vet know about your dog's fear of noises so they can check there are no contributing medical problems. Your vet will also be able to suggest whether additional treatments might be helpful.

You can find out how to source an accredited behaviourist here:

dogstrust.org.uk/dog-advice/understanding-your-dog/finding-behaviour-and-training-support



Preventing noise fears

Introduce your dog to noises in a gradual and positive way, so they are less likely to find them scary. You can use Sound Therapy for Pets, a convenient set of online sound recordings. This introduction is best done during puppyhood but can also be helpful for older dogs who haven't experienced certain noises before.

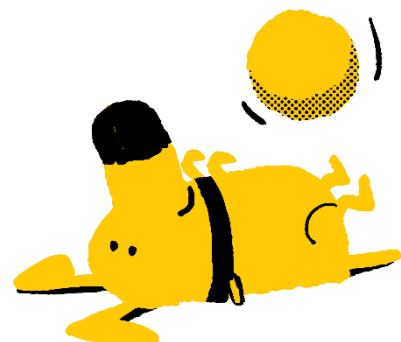
You can find the sound recordings on our website:

[dogstrust.org.uk/dog-advice/understanding-your-dog/sound-therapy-for-pets](https://www.dogstrust.org.uk/dog-advice/understanding-your-dog/sound-therapy-for-pets)

Before you get started, make sure you can recognise signs of fear or anxiety in your dog. Our **Body Language** handout describes signs to look out for. If you see any of these signs, you know you're progressing too quickly. Set the recording up in a room familiar to your dog, making sure it's ready to play at the lowest possible volume. Double check before your pooch joins you!

Before you play the noise, make sure that your dog is relaxed or engaged in positive behaviours, such as playing a game or enjoying a chew.

- When they're relaxed, play the noise at a very low volume (barely audible to the human ear). This will help ensure that your dog doesn't feel any fear or anxiety in response.
- Watch your dog carefully when playing the noises. They should continue playing or acting as if there are no 'scary noises' in the background.
- If this is the case, you can turn up the volume very slightly on your next training session.
- Repeat this process, increasing the volume of the recordings gradually over successive sessions. But each time checking that your dog is always relaxed.
- Should they seem anxious during a session, stop playing the recordings immediately.
- Once your dog is relaxed again, start to play the sound but at a lower volume, so that they no longer react.
- When you next increase the volume again, make sure you do it by a smaller amount.



Providing a safe space

Create a safe, secure space or 'den' so your dog has somewhere to hide should they hear a noise that frightens them. Make the space quite snug as this will help give them a sense of security. This could be a space in their favourite room, such as a comfy bed under a table covered with blankets to make it cosy and help with soundproofing. Or an indoor kennel or crate with blankets inside and over the top.

Introduce your dog to their den so they become familiar with it being a safe place. Build up positive associations with the space by offering your dog things they enjoy in there, such as a long-lasting chew, puzzle feeder or favourite toy. If you introduce it for the first time when your dog is frightened, for example during a storm or on Bonfire Night, they may not use it (in which case don't try to force them).

Your dog may have already found their own favourite space, such as by the side of the sofa or under a table. If this is the case, you could put a comfy blanket or bed there to make it a safe and snug haven for them.



Supporting your dog

- Find out the dates of local firework displays and ask your neighbours if they plan to let any off. There are lots of online neighbourhood groups available via social media where you might be able to find out this information.
- Keep an eye on weather reports to see if any storms are forecast.
- Avoid taking your dog out when there might be a risk of scary noises, such as thunder or fireworks. Always finish exercise in good time to allow your dog to settle inside the house before any loud noises start.
- Make the environment less scary for your dog by blocking out the noise and flashes of light. Close the curtains, turn lights on, and turn up the volume on your TV or radio.

- Make sure your house and garden are secure during storms and fireworks, as some dogs may try to run away if they're scared.
- Provide your dog with enjoyable activities to do, such as scattering treats for them to find, playing a game with their favourite toy, practising some reward-based training, giving them a snuffle mat, or offering them a long-lasting chew or puzzle feeder.
- Stay calm and try to act how you normally would. Doing something different from usual may cause your dog to worry even more. For example, going to the window is likely to draw your dog's attention to what is going on outside.
- If your dog uses their den or hides away elsewhere, leave them alone - they're trying to do what works best to cope with the noises. Don't approach or try to move them as this could scare your dog more and may even result in aggression.
- If your dog dashes about or knocks something over by accident, avoid telling them off. Your dog is behaving like this because they are scared, and it's counter-productive to get angry.
- Your dog may seek your reassurance when worried by noises, and it's okay to provide your dog comfort when they need it. In the long-term, you don't want them to be reliant on your attention but if they are frightened and want your reassurance, you should give it to them.



Contacts for further support

We provide lifelong telephone-based behavioural support for all our adopted dogs. If you need help for your **Dogs Trust dog** please email:

postadoptionssupport@dogstrust.org.uk

Everyone else can access support by emailing our training and behaviour helpline:

behavioursupportline@dogstrust.org.uk

Your nearest Dog School Team are also happy to help and can be contacted via:

dogstrustdogschoo.org.uk

The advice contained in this handout is of a general nature and is no substitute for specific behavioural or veterinary advice. If you are worried about your dog, then do consult your vet.

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