

## Should You Take Your Dog to the Office?

It seems like the best of both worlds: You go to work and your dog comes too. What could be nicer than spending the day together instead of leaving them at home? Before you embark on this change in both your routines, however, there are a number of considerations:

### Benefits of alone time

Many dogs benefit from some alone time. It builds resilience, independence and an ability to be calm. If your dog's already on the clingy side, having them with you 24/7 may heighten their hyper-attachment. This could become problematic on days when you can't take them in or have other reasons to leave them at home alone. So, think about your dog's current attachment level: will you be helping or hindering them by taking them to work? If you decide to bring your bud along, maybe do it 2 out of 5 days, rather than for the entire work week.



### Is your office truly “dog-friendly”?

Even if the work policy allows dogs, you want to make sure that your colleagues are all on board with having a hairy staffer joining the floor. Some people are not comfortable with dogs, no matter how gentle their temperament. Others are allergic. Still others just don't like the smell, the shedding, the slobber. Try to get honest reactions from everyone before you make this move.

### Is your dog “office friendly”?

If your dog has a shy or nervous temperament, they may not share your desire to bring them into a busy environment for 8 hours a day. A quiet office with few people and low activity might be suitable and even helpful for dogs whose confidence levels need a little boost. However, lots of activity and lots of attention could be counterproductive, causing a dog's shyness and fear to escalate. Obviously, if you have a dog that's very reactive to strangers and other dogs, it is not safe to bring them to work. But the same goes for dogs that are selectively reactive. Don't gamble on your dog being fine 80% of the time and risk potentially dangerous behaviour during the other 20%. It's not fair to your colleagues and it's not fair to your dog, putting them into high-pressure situations where they feel threatened and triggered to react.

### Is your dog a barker?

This will not go down well when people are conducting business in person or over Zoom calls. Some dog-friendly offices institute a maximum number of allowed barks; if your dog hits the limit, you have to take them home.



## Is your dog fully house trained?

Dogs that have even occasional accidents may wear out their welcome pretty quickly when the office broadloom gets stained or little gifts are left in cubicle corners.

## Be properly equipped for office visits

If you deem your dog to be a suitable office mate, you'll need to come properly equipped to ensure everything goes smoothly and safely:

- o Bring a crate or other form of confinement, such as an x-pen, to work so you can confine your dog when you leave your area to attend a meeting or grab a coffee. If you're lucky enough to have an office with a door, a crate is still advisable so that if unfamiliar people enter the room when you're not there and startle the dog, they'll be safely tucked away. Even your calm and sociable pooch may present new behaviours while adjusting to this different environment.
- o If your office has an open floor plan, your dog's confinement area should also have visual barriers of some kind to give them privacy and minimize stress and excitement. This could be a blanket covering 3 sides of a crate or rearranging the position of your desk or bookshelf near an x-pen to reduce your dog's sightlines.
- o Leave a leash on your dog inside so you can quickly take control of them as needed.
- o Preferably, feed your dog their meals at home, not during work hours. Bring plenty of small treats to use for intros with your colleagues.
- o Bring whatever else your dog needs in the course of a day: blanket or bed for their confinement area, long-lasting diversions such as chews and food-stuffed Kongs, toys, and poop bags. In the event your dog piddles on the carpet, make sure your doggy kit includes a spray that neutralizes urine accidents, available at pet stores.

## Other dogs in the office

If there are other dogs visiting the office, you'll need a plan of safe management:

- o Ask the other owners about their dogs' temperaments and discuss how you'll do the introductions. Dogs might be very easy going in other circumstances, such as greeting each other outdoors, but meeting indoors for the first time in an unfamiliar space might be a different story. Start with an indirect encounter in a neutral area, for example, walking the dogs parallel to each other outside the building, before entering the workspace. If you and your colleague need to take an elevator to your office, do it separately, so the newly introduced dogs are not confined in a small space before they are well acquainted.
- o Once inside, keep your dog with you or confined in their crate; don't allow them to wander and potentially provoke territorial responses from other dog visitors.
- o Get a weekly schedule of when other dogs typically come to the office; you may want to avoid bringing yours on a very busy visiting day.
- o Be on the watch for resource guarding occurring between office dogs. Even if your dog is typically not a guarder, another dog poking around them when they're working on a bully stick might spark some friction. Make sure to have your dog in their confinement space when they have a high-value long-lasting treat or special toy and that other office dogs are not in close proximity.

