



# Train Loyal Companions, LLC

"Unleash Your Potential"



## Pawsitively Safe Holidays

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### A Safe Season for Your Pets

The holidays are a time of joy, celebration, and togetherness, but for our pets, they can also bring major changes, unfamiliar visitors, new scents, and disruptions to daily routines. While some animals enjoy the excitement, others may feel overwhelmed or anxious. With a little planning and a lot of compassion, you can help your pets stay comfortable, safe, and happy all season long.

### Create a Safe Space Just for Them

Holiday gatherings can be loud and unpredictable. A designated quiet zone gives your pet a place to decompress, preventing stress-related behaviors.

Tips for a Cozy Pet Retreat:

- Provide a bed or crate with soft blankets and familiar scents.
- Keep this area off-limits to guests, especially children.
- Use calming tools like white noise, a fan, or soft classical music.
- Add comfort items: favorite toys, enrichment chews, calming pheromone spray, or an unwashed T-shirt of yours.
- For cats: offer vertical spaces, hiding spots, or a safe room with a litter box, food, water, and resting areas.

### Guest Etiquette for Pet Safety

Not all pets, and not all guests, know how to interact safely with one another. Managing excited or anxious behavior requires patience, consistency, and positive reinforcement.

Help Your Guests Help Your Pet:

- Let visitors know your pet's comfort level, particularly if your pet is shy or reactive.
- Teach your dog an auto-sit and on your bed command to encourage relaxation
- Ask guests to allow the pet to approach on their own terms.
- Post a friendly sign: *"Please don't let the pets outside"* on doors.
- Store purses, medications, and food items out of reach.
- Watch for signs of stress: tucked tail, lip licking, pacing, hiding, or growling.
- Give pets breaks often, alone time can help them reset.
- Offer long-lasting enrichment to help them settle.

### Holiday Hazards to Watch For

Decorations and festive foods can be dangerous to curious animals. Choose pet-safe alternatives when possible, and supervise closely.

Keep pets away from:

- Chocolate, xylitol, alcohol, grapes/raisins, and fatty foods
- Holiday plants like lilies, mistletoe, pine needles, and poinsettias
- Tinsel, ornaments, ribbons, and string lights
- Candles or wax warmers



## **Provide Lots of Enrichment & Mental Stimulation**

Dogs are remarkably intelligent. As Dr. Karen L. Overall notes, research shows that domestic dogs share many of the cognitive processes and neurochemical patterns found in humans. Their mental abilities are often compared to those of a two- to three-year-old child, though each breed and individual varies greatly.

It is an undisputed fact that emotions drive behavior. Relaxation helps counteract the neurochemistry of fear and frustration. When holiday routines shift, enrichment keeps pets grounded, confident, and calm, while reducing unwanted behaviors.

Enrichment Ideas:

- Rotate toys to keep things interesting
- Keep activities short but frequent
- Pair enrichment with calm praise to build positive associations
- Use puzzle toys, snuffle mats, interactive play, and snuggle time for mental stimulation
- Give cats food puzzles, wand toys, cardboard boxes, and climbing opportunities

## **Help Pets Reduce Stress Naturally**

Pets thrive on predictable routines. During the holidays, try to keep feeding times, walks, and play sessions as consistent as possible. Gradual adjustments help them cope better with change. Your calm demeanor matters, your pet looks to you for safety and reassurance. Many pets feel the holiday stress just like we do: new smells, noise, people, and schedule disruptions can be overwhelming.

Try the following calming tools:

- Pheromone diffusers (Adaptil, Feliway)
- Calming music or “white noise pets” playlists, or brown noise
- Slow, gentle petting, T-Touch or calming talk
- Short training sessions for mental stimulation
- Frozen treats to help self-soothe
- For shy pets: allow hiding! It's a healthy coping strategy.

If your pet has a history of anxiety or fear, reach out to a force-free trainer (<https://training.apdt.com>) or veterinarian for guidance and potential support tools.

## **Teach Kids & Guests Humane Interactions**

Holiday gatherings can be a great teaching moment.

Help children (and adults!) learn:

- How to pet gently with a “one hand” rule – remember it is best to pet under the chin or on the chest
- To give pets space during meals and when resting
- To never approach a pet in a crate or on a bed
- To respect growls, hisses, or avoidance as communication, not “bad behavior”

Kindness and empathy build lifelong positive relationships with animals. It is cool to be kind!

## **End the Night with Connection**

When the crowd leaves and the house quiets down, take a few minutes to reconnect with your pet. A calm walk, gentle brushing, or cozy cuddle time can help them unwind and settle back into their routine. Cuddling releases oxytocin—the “feel-good hormone”—in both humans and animals, making it a perfect way to end a long and eventful holiday day.