



Christmas With Dogs: A Practical Survival Guide

This quick guide is designed to help dog owners navigate the festive period calmly and safely. Rather than focusing on perfection or intensive training, it prioritises practical management and prevention - the things that make the biggest difference during busy, unpredictable times like Christmas.

How to Use This Guide

If Christmas is approaching and you're worried about how your dog will cope, this document is for you. Each section outlines a common festive problem followed by a clear, realistic solution you can implement immediately.

Common Festive Problems & Practical Solutions

Problem #1: Disrupted Routine. Christmas often brings late nights, lie-ins and missed walks. For dogs, this loss of predictability can increase stress.

Solution #1: Protect routine anchor points. Keep the morning walk, meals and bedtime roughly consistent, even if everything else flexes.

Problem #2: Overstimulation From Visitors. Extra people, noise and attention can overwhelm even social dogs.

Solution #2: Create a safe, no-access space where your dog can opt out without being disturbed.

Problem #3: Increased Stress and Restlessness: Busy days with lots of stimulation can leave dogs unable to settle.

Solution #3: Schedule sniffing and decompression walks to help your dog regulate and relax.

Problem #4: Food Stealing or Scavenging. Festive food is everywhere at Christmas, often within easy reach.

Solution #4: Manage the environment using gates, leads and clear rules rather than relying on willpower.

Problem #5: Behaviour Regression. Owners often feel training has gone backwards over the holidays.

Solution #5: Lower expectations. Focus on maintaining familiar behaviours rather than pushing for progress.

Problem #6: Too Many Busy Days in a Row. Dogs need recovery time after high-stimulation events.

Solution #6: Alternate busy days with calm days that prioritise rest and low demands.

Other Things to Keep in Mind

- Brief visitors in advance and ask them to ignore your dog initially.
- Watch early stress signals such as lip licking, pacing or disengagement.
- Stick to familiar rewards rather than exciting new treats.
- End busy days with calm routines.
- Supervise interactions between dogs and children closely.

Festive Food Safety

Foods Dogs Must <u>Not</u> Eat	Safer Festive Options for Dogs
Chocolate	Plain cooked turkey or chicken (no seasoning or skin)
Christmas pudding and mince pies	Carrots, parsnips or green beans
Grapes & raisins	Plain scrambled or boiled egg
Onions, garlic and leeks (including stuffing and gravy)	Stuffed Kong with familiar fillings
Alcohol	Normal food served through enrichment such as snuffle mats
Cooked bones	
Xylitol	
Fatty trimmings	

A Final Word

Christmas behaviour challenges are common and normal. Management keeps everyone safe now; training builds better habits later. If issues persist once routines return, professional support can help turn festive stress into long-term progress.