



KALMPETS

Creating calm for all

Puppy 'Safe Place' Training

Safe Place Training:

Why a safe place:

This is one of the most valuable behaviours you can teach your dog. Denning or seeking small, dark spaces is a very natural behaviour for our canine friends who have been born to seek protection in a den. Not only do they need security if they are frightened, but need sanctuary when left alone or are insecure about a new environment.

Applications:

1. If your puppy must stay for any length of time at the groomer or vet, even just an hour, he will most likely be put in a cage.
2. The 'safe place' keeps a dog safe in the car as well as his owner and can be an absolute blessing if you want to go away on holiday and take your furry friend with you!
3. At home it helps to encourage independence.
4. It aids in toilet training and learning to hold on.

Think of your puppy's 'safe place' as his or her own portable bedroom.

Preparation

- 🐕 Choose the style of 'safe place'. Options include mesh or canvas crates, coffee tables and boxes.
- 🐕 Bigger is not better in this case. Choose a 'safe place' size that allows your puppy to stand up and turn around. Any major pet supplier will stock crates and most will allow you to take your dog with you to see how it fits!
- 🐕 Training your puppy to love their 'safe place' may take just a few hours or days, and could take several weeks depending on you and your puppy
- 🐕 Location is vital – the safe place must be located in the part of your home where the humans spend most of their time and oriented with the doorway facing the action.

- 🐕 The 'safe place' should be covered on every-side except the front door.
- 🐕 Prop open the door or take the door off. 'Safe places' are generally more safe if the puppy can choose when they are in or out. Doors need to be worked up to being accepted over time.

Getting familiar with the 'safe place'

If your puppy seems fearful of the 'safe place', you may want to get them to practicing going in and out before training a go-into-your-safe place cue.

- 🐕 Toss a piece of food just inside the door. Repeat several times then start tossing food farther back.
- 🐕 Feed your puppy every meal in the back of the 'safe place'.
- 🐕 While your puppy is happily eating his meals and/or treats in the back of the 'safe place', quietly and calmly close and open the door repeatedly.
- 🐕 Do not make a fuss or attempt to bribe your puppy into the 'safe place' as this can have the opposite effect and lead to your puppy thinking that the 'safe place' is scary as it makes the humans act all 'strange'.

Training your puppy to enter the 'safe place' on cue:

- 🐕 If you have been feeding your puppy's meals in the 'safe place' they may already be eagerly running in before you put the food in. This is fantastic because the goal is to get them to happily go into the 'safe place' without luring them in each time with a treat.
- 🐕 Once puppy is hopping in the 'safe place' with a spring in their step, add a verbal cue, such as "den" right before they step inside and reward with a tasty treat.



KALMPETS
Creating calm for all

Puppy 'Safe Place' Training

For those dogs who won't go in without a lure, follow these steps:

- 🐕 Step 1: When puppy looks at or steps toward the 'safe place', give them a treat. Reward each time they look then wait for step 2.
- 🐕 Step 2: Wait until puppy puts their nose in 'safe place', give them a treat. Repeat each time they put their nose in then wait for step 3.
- 🐕 Step 3: Treat for one paw in the 'safe place', two paws in the 'safe place', etc.
- 🐕 Step 4: If your puppy goes all the way into the 'safe place', give 3-4 treats in quick succession.
- 🐕 Step 5: Once puppy is reliably going in the 'safe place', add a cue such as "den," and don't forget to continue working on opening and closing the door as listed above.

Staying in the 'Safe Place'

- 🐕 Practice at the end of the day when puppy is tired and when the room has limited distractions.
- 🐕 Give your puppy his cue to go in the 'safe place' (e.g. 'den'), throw treat to back of 'safe place'.
- 🐕 Shut the door, wait several seconds, open the door. Don't fuss over the puppy when they come out of the 'safe place' – we're trying to reward them for being IN the 'safe place', not out.
- 🐕 Repeat several times while increasing the amount of time that the door is shut. If your puppy is tired and does not whine or scratch at the door you may be able to increase the time by several minutes each session.

Tips

- 🐕 Don't make a bad association with the 'safe place' by shoving your puppy in.
- 🐕 Never make a fuss when you let your puppy out of the 'safe place' - even if he's been in there for an hour. All you are doing is reinforcing him for coming OUT of the 'safe place'.
- 🐕 Give your puppy their favourite chew toy, treats, stuffed Kong, in the 'safe place' and nowhere else.
- 🐕 Give your puppy free access to the 'safe place' at all times by leaving the door open. If leaving the door open, ensure that the door is secured open to prevent it accidentally banging and scaring your puppy.
- 🐕 Vary the amount of time your puppy spends in the 'safe place'. The puppy that gets locked up for six hours every time he goes in his 'safe place' might become reluctant to do so.