

# CRATE TRAINING GAMES

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**Games to help your dog love their crate/confinement spot!**

*Information regarding Separation Anxiety is at the end*



Visit our YouTube for VIDEOS about each game

[Crate Training 101](#)



# Game 1: Raining Cookies

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- **Purpose:** Helps your dog understand the crate predicts fun
- **Steps:**
  - For the duration of this game, leave the crate door open so the dog has quick access to enter/exit as they please.
  - First, toss a treat inside the crate.
  - Once they enter the crate to find the treat, be sure to praise them verbally.
  - Next, have them exit the crate and toss a treat back inside for them to re-enter.
  - Play Raining Cookies for 2 or so minutes at a time, a few times a day.
  - You may use your dog's meals for this activity as well.

# Game 2: Let Me IN!

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- **Purpose:** Building drive to enter the crate.
- **Steps:**
  - Place something enticing inside the crate and close the door: Kongs, lickimats, food bowls, snuffle mats, bully sticks etc.
  - The dog might rush to the crate, paw at it, nudge it, whine at the door, circle around it, etc.
  - Once they show this interest/desire to enter, open the door and let them receive the reward.

# Game 3: Open House



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- **Purpose:** Your dog has the option to leave, but this will help teach them staying in the crate offers better outcomes.
  - **Steps:**
    - Leave the crate door open for the duration of this game
    - Be sure you can stay close to supervise
    - Items to use:
      - Option 1) Meal placed in a slow feeder bowl or snuffle mat
      - Option 2) A delicious lickimat
      - Option 3) The Groove Popsicle that locks into the crate sides
    - You will need to use something your dog cannot take out of the crate – that defeats the purpose!

# Game 4: Crate TV

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- **Purpose:** Teaching your dog to relax while you randomly exit.
- **Steps:**
  - Place your dog's crate by you, and turn on your favorite show
  - When your dog is quietly hanging out in their crate (door closed), drop some of their kibble or high value reinforcement inside. You are working on rewarding them for relaxing while you relax.
  - Every once in a while, walk out of the room briefly. Come back and reward your dog. Remember to feed him when he is relaxed. Gradually increase the time you're out of the room to help your dog understand alone time in the crate is relaxing.

# Game 5: Leave-N-Relax

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- **Steps:**

- Play this game when your dog is able to comfortably hangout in the crate
- To start, practice leaving them alone for 10-30 minutes. Eventually, build up to a total of 3-4 hours in a day.
- Always leave your dog with a job to do (aka a crate safe item) so they are continuing to practice being positively paired to their crate while you are away and their brains remain occupied.
- Set up crate cameras to check on your dog and take note of their habits: are they relaxing? Sleeping? Whining? Howling? Hurting themselves? Tantrum? Destructive behaviors? How long have they been doing this for? Do they eventually settle/How long did that take? This will better help you understand your dog and what they need.

# Tantrum vs Separation Anxiety

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- Make sure your dog has successfully eliminated outside before putting them in the crate for a longer period.
- Ask yourself if you have truly been practicing crate training your dog (schedule, the games, etc.)
- A doggie tantrum **versus** true separation anxiety can sometimes be tricky to decipher.
- **Tantrums are normal.** What's not, is true separation anxiety. These dogs need help.
- Review the next slide for some information regarding the two.



# Tantrum vs Separation Anxiety

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## Tantrum:

- If your dog whines or cries while in the crate, it can be difficult to decide whether they want to be let out or if they need to potty.
- **If you feel as though your dog needs to potty**, take them out of the crate and immediately to the designated potty area. If your dog potties, excellent! Reward them.
- **If they do not**, place them back in the crate and try working on calmness again.
- Appropriate management and a consistent schedule are key to crate training and potty training.
- If you've followed the steps above, your dog won't be rewarded for whining by being let out of the crate in the future.
- Don't teach them that whining = crate door opens and it's play time. Play the outlined crate games with your dog as you progressively leave them alone when they are calm. Yelling at them will simply increase their terror and reinforce the fact that you heard them.
- Do not let friends, family, veterinarians, tell you that you need to be **"dominant"**, **"firm"**, **"harsh"** etc. with your PUPPY/DOG who is LEARNING how to crate/confinement train.





# Tantrum vs Separation Anxiety

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## Separation Anxiety: Symptoms

- Severe panicking for an excessive period. Your dog may exhibit one or multiple of the following:
  - **Extreme salivation**
  - **Pacing without rest**
  - **Shaking, trembling**
  - **Urinating, defecating, coprophagia**
  - **Destruction – shredding**
  - **Causing self-harm**
- Attempting to use the crate as a remedy for SA may not solve the problem.
- Being harsh won't solve the problem either.
- A crate may prevent your dog from destructive behavior, but they may injure themselves while panicking.
- SA situations may be resolved with counter-conditioning/desensitization procedures that a certified separation anxiety trainer can help you with. In some cases, medication is prescribed by a veterinarian.
- Contact a certified separation anxiety trainer for help (CSAT).



# Separation Anxiety Recommendations

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1. Does your dog follow you from room to room for most of the day?
  2. Does your dog become anxious, shake, tremble or pace as you prepare to leave?
  3. Does your dog bark, whine, or howl excessively when you are gone?
  4. Where does your dog spend time when you leave them alone?
  5. Are you able to crate, pen, or close your dog off in a room while you are gone?
  6. When you leave your dog alone:
    - How long does your dog cry, whine or bark when left alone? How long do they cry, whine, or bark when left alone in a crate or pen?
    - Will they settle, eventually?
    - Does your dog destroy items left in the crate, (like the dog bed)
    - Does your dog excessively drool?
    - Does your dog urinate or defecate when left alone?
    - Does your dog hurt themselves when left alone?
- Extreme separation anxiety is not our area of expertise. While we can help with dogs that need a little help making separation more fun, in severe cases, we recommend working with a trainer that specializes in separation anxiety. We have researched these companies and can recommend them to our clients. Please know that we still want to help you, so let us know if you have additional questions or need additional information.
  - <https://malenademartini.com/>
  - <https://www.believeinyour.dog/>

