



## Setting Up a Safe Space

Creating a safe space for your dog can be helpful for a myriad of issues: fear of visitors, impulse control, or separation anxiety. This is simply a space—a crate, room, or entire section of the house—that your dog can go to relax and feel secure using this space, even if they are alone. While it sounds simple enough there are some rules you should follow to make sure this space is having the effect it should:

- Make it comfy! If you want your dog to choose this space willingly it should be comfortable, not only in cushioning but also size.
- Location is important. It should be in a quiet area. If you're using this space for a dog who is fearful of visitors this safe space should be in an area where visitors will not go. If you're using this space for separation anxiety, it should be in an area where your dog can see the door you're using.
- Do not bother your dog while they are in this space. This is a place for them to relax and regroup by themselves.
- Kids should not be allowed in this space.
- If your dog has confinement anxiety, you should not use a crate.
- Teach your dog to enjoy spending prolonged periods of time in this space using a crate training plan (see associated handout). While this plan is specifically about crates, it applies to any space your dog will be in room, area of the house.
- Do not force your dog into this space or use it as a punishment. We want your dog to willingly choose to use this space—not see it as a bad place where scary things happen!
- You should train your dog to go to this space on a cue, such as “place.”
- I recommend incorporating calming activities into this space, such as calming music and aromatherapy.
- I also recommend providing things for your dog to chew on and lick, such as bully sticks and frozen stuffed Kongs, while in this space. You may want to provide other ways for your dog to entertain themselves while in this space if they will be there for a while.

### When should I use this space?

This will be dependent on your dog and specific situation. A good rule of thumb is to use this space both as a form of management and as a relaxation technique. For instance, you can put your dog in this space before visitors arrive if your dog is uncomfortable with people coming into the house or if you're working on your dog not jumping up on visitors. This would be management: setting the scenario up for your dog to perform the wanted behavior. Later in the visit you could send your dog back to this space if you notice they are getting uncomfortable or too rowdy to help them relax.