

In and Out Game

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e3ZlyMSJO44>

Objective: Dog exits crate and immediately orients toward handler, then goes right back in

Why:

The crate is our secure, homebase when we are away from home. It both physically and psychologically provides a barrier between the dog and the rest of the environment.

One way to reduce the intensity of exposure to the environment is to reduce exposure time. Think running your finger through a candle flame vs holding your finger in a candle flame. Big difference in your perception of that stimulus, right?

We can use the crate as an island of safety (or a cave of reduced sensory input), and let the dog dip a toe then back to safety. This gives us a tool to let the dog quickly adjust to the environment, and it is also a great game for getting a rhythm going at the beginning of any training session.

I also want to make sure that exiting and entering the crate is a strong, voluntary behavior for the dog. This is different from how we often teach a dog to “wait” in the crate (usually by closing the door in his face). In fact, whether or not the dog is used to waiting for the crate, you will want to reduce that criteria in this context. We don’t want to take the risk of accidentally introducing a -P or +P effect into the training session, ESPECIALLY at an actual trial, and closing the door on a dog to remind him to wait has definitely -P effects on behavior.

So for our purposes, I would rather the dog exit the crate without being cued, but turn to face the handler immediately, than have the dog hesitant or careful about exiting the crate. Use your release word if you want, but no -P or +P if your dog doesn’t wait!!!

Use this game to begin any session in a new and distracting environment.

1.
 - a. Dog in crate, reward several times with door closed
 - b. Open door, reward in crate.
 - c. Release dog from crate, click the instant dog breaks the plane of the door.
 - d. Cue back into crate, reward.
 - e. Repeat.
 - f.

*Note: It works best if you position your body so that the dog has to turn at least 90 degrees as he comes out of the crate.

You can actually use the same pattern with any threshold, or anytime you move from a smaller/less exciting area to a bigger/more exciting area.