

EXIT STRATEGY

ENTERING AND EXITING A DOG'S KENNEL

GOAL: To teach dogs to wait on their beds any time a person enters or exits the kennel. Dogs will learn that when a person's hand goes on the kennel door, they should move to the back of the kennel and wait on their beds for a leash to be clipped into their walking equipment (collar, harness, or head collar).

GENERAL RULES:

- This protocol should be followed EVERY time you interact with the dog.
- The dog must be on their Kuranda (or plush) bed when walking equipment is placed on or taken off the dog.
- Initially, do this by entering the kennel and pointing to the bed (or tossing treats on the bed). Over time, as the dog learns the behavior, the hand signal and the cue for the behavior is you showing intention to enter the kennel (placing your hand on the kennel door).
- When you return to the kennel, take the dog back to their Kuranda bed, and remove the dog's leash and walking equipment while the dog is on the bed.

HOW THE LEARNING TAKES PLACE:

- We teach dogs this behavior by shaping the behavior that we want.
- Shaping requires rewarding small, and then increasingly bigger, 'pieces' of a final behavior.
- Initially we reward the dog for going on his bed. As we shape the final behavior we reward the dog for going to his bed while we gradually move closer and closer to the kennel door.
- When entering the kennel, remember the biggest reward that you can give most dogs is going into the kennel because the dog wants to go for a walk.
- Placing your hand on the kennel door should not happen unless the dog is displaying the behavior that you want because placing your hand on the kennel door is a reward for the dog

ENTERING THE KENNEL (LEVEL ONE):

1. Dog must have four feet on the floor (no jumping!) and be quiet (no barking!) before you enter kennel.
 - a. If the dog is too excited to do this, use a treat to increase the dog's motivation.
 - b. Quickly enter the kennel before the dog starts jumping or barking again, while simultaneously praising and feeding a treat to the dog.
2. Enter the kennel, walk to the back of the kennel, and lure the dog onto his bed with a treat. Praise and feed the dog a treat once the dog is on his bed.
3. The dog is not required to do anything other than stand on the Kuranda bed. Sit or down is not necessary. Place the dog's walking equipment on, while the dog is on the bed. If needed, use treats to safely and efficiently get the dog's harness or head collar onto the dog.

(next)

4. Say 'OK' to release the dog from its bed, and take the dog out of its kennel.
5. The dog must 'say please' to exit the kennel (either four feet on the floor or sit).
Remember that if the dog is DESPERATE to go out in the morning for bathroom time and doesn't know how to sit, you can skip this step.

ENTERING THE KENNEL (LEVEL TWO):

(This level is working toward your hand on the door as the cue for going to the bed)

1. Once you have been following the above routine for 2-3 days, start pointing to the bed before you get to the Kuranda bed. The dog should run ahead of you to get on its bed; quickly follow the dog, and then praise and put walking equipment on dog.
2. Over time, point from farther distances from the bed (closer to the kennel door). If the dog is not running to the bed at each step, stay at an 'easier' distance from the bed, for a longer period of time.
3. Once you can stand all the way at the door, and the dog runs to its bed (and waits on it!) when you point, start pointing from outside the kennel, and THEN put your hand on the kennel door to open it (after the dog is on its bed)
4. Over time, the cue for this behavior will be putting your hand on the kennel door.. you can stop pointing.

RETURNING TO THE KENNEL:

1. Do NOT require that the dog sit to go back IN to the kennel; for most dogs returning to the kennel is not a reward as it means they are away from people.
2. Enter the kennel with the dog, and take the dog to its Kuranda bed, while still on its leash.
3. If desired (this is not required), ask the dog to 'sit' or 'down' – calmly and quietly praise/treat when the dog sits or downs. Remove the dog's walking equipment.
4. Gently and quietly pet the dog (if the dog enjoys petting) and then calmly exit the kennel.



CENTER FOR
Shelter Dogs

A PROGRAM OF THE ANIMAL RESCUE LEAGUE OF BOSTON