HUNTING GAMES – THE FOUNDATIONS

🎾 Game 21 - Crate Games

Provides clarity about release cue and teaches patience.

🎾 Why This Game Matters

Crate Games is probably the most valuable game that you will ever play. It provides your dog with clarity about leaving a position. Furthermore, it teaches patience and steadiness for dogs who love to chase. Playing this game will teach your dog that triggers are not important to react to, calm and collected they can think in the presence of a distraction until they hear your cue to action.

A dog who is comfortable in a crate is a dog, who is comfortable being transported in their car crate, hanging out between runs, being at the vet in a kennel, are comfortable when they need to be on crate rest due to medical reasons.

🎾 What you'll need

- Hard wire or hard plastic crate, appropriate size for your dog.
- Your dog on a flat collar
- Leash
- Phone on a tripod
- 45 min to 1 hour.
- Medium – high value treats

🎾 Step-by-Step-Guide

1. Set Up

The game is broken down into 6 steps, each building on to each other. Try to play through the whole game in one session.
No- slip floor, low distracting environment.

It is important to note that we are not cuing our dog for any behaviour during this game. Although they might already know the cue "sit", we want them to make that

©Not to be re-printed without the written permission of Anke's Dog Training. Copyright 2024

choice on their own. This is the preferred behaviour since it will bring them back further into the crate and gives you more time to react to their choices. It is also easier to have muddled up criteria with a down position, as the paws could be overlapping the crate frame when the door is left open.

2. Build the Behaviour

Building on to Hot Zone foundations, create value for the crate. We're teaching our dog that being at the back of the crate when the door opens, is the place to be.

Mechanics: If the crate door is hinged on the right (door handle on the left), you open the door with your left hand and feed with your right hand. This will allow you blocking the exit and prevents your dog from escaping.

- With your dog in the crate, close the door.
- Open the door, reach inside and feed at the very back of the top corner. Feed the cookie up high to promote your dog sitting.
- Close the door, stand up.
- Repeat 5 – 10 times without your dog leaving the crate.
- Ignore any unwanted behaviour and only open the door to feed when they are calm.

By opening, closing, and latching the door each time, we are condition the dog to:

- Door latch makes noise = cookie is coming at the back of the crate.

Follow the exact steps and placement of reward is important.

Ideally, your dog is not making eye contact with you since we will be introducing different positions we are in or being out of the room later. This will also teach the dog that they can be comfortable in their crate when you are out of sight.

©Not to be re-printed without the written permission of Anke's Dog Training. Copyright 2024

HUNTING GAMES – THE FOUNDATIONS

🎾 Troubleshooting

My dog is coming forward, meeting my treat hand halfway.

Only release the cookie to their mouth at the back of the crate.

3. Adding a Layer (IYC)

What is your dog's choice when you open the door?
Watch for any movement, have your criteria set (e.g. no paw movement, a strong sit).
You need to be quick with your decisions to make the learning for your dog easier.

Good choice – reward at the back.
Moving forward – close the door.

- Stand at the side of the crate for easy reach of the handle.
- Slightly open the door.
    - Dog moves towards the door – close it - Repeat previous step for 5 – 10 repetitions
    - Dog sits – reward up high in the back corner.
- Repeat these steps 5 – 10 times.
- Each time be a bit braver and open the door slightly further.

By closing the door quickly, you give your dog immediate feedback of their actions. Be careful to not slam the door. Your movements should be swift but without emotions.
This is not a failure, it's information of how much your dog understands. It helps us to evaluate where they are in their learning and re-evaluate our mechanics.

You can see we are giving our dogs more choices to being incorrect as the treat doesn't come immediately. We want this to happen; this is a testing and evaluation stage so try not to help your dog by preventing mistakes.

©Not to be re-printed without the written permission of Anke's Dog Training. Copyright 2024

HUNTING GAMES – THE FOUNDATIONS

🎾 Troubleshooting

My dog constantly moves when I open the door, they won't sit.

Re-evaluate the reinforcer you're using – it might not be as high value as you thought.
If you are already using the highest value, you can think off, spend more time in the previous step to build up the value for being in the crate. Call it a day and play again tomorrow.

If you are using a wired crate or a crate with ventilation holes, start feeding through the wires instead.
Be mindful of your reinforcement process, as this is critical:

- Open the door
- Delay for a second
- Present your treat to the top or sides of the crate.
- Your dog should not move or reach for the cookie coming. Adjust your delivery accordingly.

4. Raise Criteria

Shape your dog to sit when we place our hand on the crate door. We are also going to build up duration the door can be left open.

- Place your hand on the door latch.
    - If your dog moves towards the door, take your hand off again and stand up or move a bit away.
    - If your dog offers a different body position or moves away from the door, praise them, open the door quickly to reward at the back of the crate or through the wires.
- Once your dog is offering a sit when you place your hand on the door, make sure to only reward this when they remain in this position when you open the door.
    - If they move, close the door again and reset.
- Start building duration by only opening the door when your dog is sitting. Feed them for a good choice by remaining in position when the door opened.

©Not to be re-printed without the written permission of Anke's Dog Training. Copyright 2024

HUNTING GAMES – THE FOUNDATIONS

- Take one step away from the open crate:
  - If your dog breaks their position, close the door.
  - If they remain in their position, go back and reward high at the corner of the crate or through the wire.
- With the crate door open, continue to reward your dog for sitting.
- Build in distance and duration separately. Only work on one criterion at a time.
- Naturally move around the crate and increase distance.
- Always coming back to reward good choices.
- Then increase the time you are a distance away from the crate.

By the end of this Stage, you should be able to have the crate door wide open with you at approx. 2m away. Practice on every side of the crate.

The worst thing that can happen is your dog leaving the crate, this is good information.

Work up to approx. 3m distance.

Adding Distractions

- Open the crate door:
  - your dog should sit when you touch the door
- Drop a cookie on the floor in front, be quick with your actions.
  - If your dog is remaining sitting, pick up the cookie, feed it to your dog.
  - If they release themselves to get to the cookie, close the crate door.
- Repeat the above step and watch for your dog's choice before moving on to the next step.
- With your dog sitting in the crate, open the door and reward them, then step away.
- Pick up your leash
  - Your dog releases their sit – close the door and drop the leash on the floor
  - Your dog stays in position – reward, drop leash on the floor

©Not to be re-printed without the written permission of Anke's Dog Training. Copyright 2024

HUNTING GAMES – THE FOUNDATIONS

- Pick up the leash, reach into the crate and clip it onto your dog's collar.
    - Close the door again if your dog attempts to break their sit.
    - Reward with a treat when your dog holds position, unclip the leash.

"Are you out OR are you in?"

Now comes the time to put everything to the test. Your dog has been reinforced a lot for being in the crate and we know that animals will repeat behaviours that have been paying well in the past.

We are releasing our dog from the crate to see what their choice is – ideally, they would want to go back. Please make sure that there are no valuable toys or treats on or around the crate.

- Open the crate door, attach your dog's leash.
- Extend the leash out on the floor.
- Reward your dog for sitting
- Lean against the door crate with your leg, stand sideways.
- Step onto the leash on the floor to limit your dog's range to approx. 60cm
- Reward your dog one more time for sitting.
- Stand up and give your release cue (I use "break"), once.
    - If you currently don't have a release cue, or your dog won't come out of the crate, repeat the cue, pause a second and slap your leg, pivoting backwards to encourage them out of the crate.
- When your dog comes out of the crate, just turn your body towards the open crate without acknowledging them (no eye contact, no speaking, no touching).
    - Ideally your dog is thinking about the great reinforcement they received INSIDE the crate and will choose to go back in. Let them make this choice.
    - Your dog returns to the crate - time for a party by throwing cookies into the crate and telling them how great they are. They should remain in the crate and not come back out.
- Close the door, put your hand on the crate, wait for them to sit at the back.
- Repeat steps 5 times. Give it a few seconds between repetitions.

©Not to be re-printed without the written permission of Anke's Dog Training. Copyright 2024

HUNTING GAMES – THE FOUNDATIONS

🎾 Troubleshooting

My dog doesn't want to go back into the crate.

Be patient and see if you can limit the area they can "wander" in. Simply take them by the collar. Since you are close to the crate door, they will soon connect the dots.
Please do not push your dog into the crate.
Revisit the earlier stages to create more value for being in the crate.

🎾 Advancing the Game

- With your dog in the crate, the leash attached and door open, hold the leash in your hand.
- Release your dog.
- When they come out, cue sit, say "cook" and reward them with a cookie to mouth.
- Release them from the sit (same cue as you release from the crate), reach for their collar, turn them towards the crate.
- Apply enough pressure to the collar to build up more enthusiasm. By pulling the dog away from something they want, they will naturally pull more towards to what they want!
- In an exciting voice say "r-e-a-d-y" and rev them up a bit. Release the collar.
- When your dog drives into the crate, throw a cookie in.

We are going to hand feed any controlled position (sitting in the crate, sitting, down, stand) and are throwing cookies for driving into the crate. This will generate even more enthusiasm to go back into the crate.

🎾 Troubleshooting

My dog loves the crate so much, they won't come out.

Reverse the value by using different value treats: use lower value cookies for being and going into the crate and higher value treats for coming out.

©Not to be re-printed without the written permission of Anke's Dog Training. Copyright 2024

HUNTING GAMES – THE FOUNDATIONS

You also might have noticed that we haven't put a verbal cue for the drive into the crate. This will come in our next game "Crate Game Distractions" when your dog will have much more experience. Putting a verbal cue on too early can delay progress of future stages.

🎾 Daily Use

Crate Games is the start to everything. The skills learned in this game can be transferred into daily life, like going through doors, jumping in and out of car, staying on a Hot Zone etc. It teaches great self-regulation, drive, and a build in stay without an extra cue. The dog learns that whatever you have asked them to do, they remain in this position until released.

🎾 Checklist

1. Did you review your session?
2. What stage did your dog struggle with?
3. Is your dog driving in and out of their crate?
4. Look at your dog's T.E.M.P (Tails, Ears/Eyes, Mouth, Posture)

©Not to be re-printed without the written permission of Anke's Dog Training. Copyright 2024