HUNTING GAMES – GROWING TOGETHER

🎾 Game 28 - Crate Games Distractions

Test your dog's understanding of the release cue in the presence of distractions.

🎾 Why This Game Matters

We take Crate Games further by teaching our dogs to show the same control in the presence of intentional distractions/triggers.
Remember that the release cue means "find the value" – ideally this would be RZ.
The choice your dog makes is great information where their value is (in the environment, in the moment) and which games you might want to revisit.

This is a testing phase, so we are expecting failures. Since these are planned failures, we can evaluate where our dogs are at in their education and where we might have some gaps. So don't be afraid of failures!

We want an enthusiastic dog, that loves to play and is not over phased by the challenges we present by adding distractions.

🎾 What You'll Need

- Your dog
- The crate you played Crate Games with
- Distractions from low to high (e.g. toys, food, items from outdoors)
- High value treats.
- Your dog's leash.
- Phone on a tripod

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🎾 Step-by-Step-Guide

1. Set Up

Make sure you have time to progress through all the stages of this game. Allow 45 min to 1 hour. Play on a non-slippery floor.

2. Build the Behaviour

- Play a few rounds of "Are you out OR are you in?" to warm up.
- Observe:
  - Is your dog enthusiastically driving into their crate?
  - Do they offer a sit at the back of the crate when you put your hand on the door?
  - Can they remain in that sit with the door open until you release them?
- Revisit Crate Games if you need to build up more value for the game.

3. Add a Layer

We are now focusing on your verbal release cue. We want our dogs to listen to our verbal cue and not relying on our movements. They should be able to react to our cues even when they cannot see us.

- Play another round of "Are you out OR Are you in?" with Collar Grab
- Take notice of your dog's release cue.
  - Do they come out when you are standing still and just use your verbal cue?
- Introduce your "go into your crate" cue.
  - when releasing your dog from the Collar Grab say your cue. I use "kennel" but this could be anything you like

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4. Raise Criteria

We are adding distractions. Start with a low value distraction from your list and work your way up, depending on your dog's choice.
The higher the value of the distraction, the more difficult it will be for your dog to make the right choice. Be intentional and true with the distraction you are presenting.

- Open the crate door. Your dog is either already sitting or will show you that they know what to do by sitting when you touch the door.
- Place the distraction on the ground approx. 1m in front of the crate, be quick with your actions.
    - Is your dog still sitting?
        - Reward with high-value treat.
    - Do they reach forward for a release?
        - Close the crate door. This is great information that the distraction was too much.
- Repeat, watch for your dog's choice before moving on to the next step.
- With your dog sitting (hand on crate door) open the door, reward them
- Step away, you are now between crate and distraction
- Release your dog using your verbal cue.
    - What is their choice?
        - Coming into RZ? Reward this good choice with a cookie or release to the distraction – mix it up!
        - Driving past to the distraction? Be quick to cover it with your foot/hand - make sure not to startle your dog with the swift movement.
        - Take them by their collar, gently guide them back.
        - Close the door, move the distraction further away OR change it to a lower distraction.
- Play again and watch your dog's choice.
- Make appropriate adjustments to the feedback you are given.
- Increase the difficulty if your dog is successful with low value distractions.
- Use your "kennel" cue every time you send your dog back in.

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5. Advancing the Game

Adding movement (e.g. dragging a chase toy on the ground) can add extra challenges. Please only do this when they have shown great self-control with the above steps.

When your dog is confidently resisting all the distractions in a non-distracting environment, it is time to take Crate Games on the road. Build this up slowly, start in your backyard, then front yard and slowly build up to more distracting environments. Always making sure your dog is happily engaged and the added distraction of the environment is not overwhelming them.

Play Crate Games out of your car.

🎾 Daily Use

Crate Games is the best tool to teach self-control and strengthen your release cue. Building up to high level distractions with Crate Games brings clarity and you have control over the environment.

Remember to be quick in your decision making, apply the same mechanics as you did in Crate Games. Instead of feeding your dog in position when they make the right choice, you can also release them to the distraction to either play a fun game (if it's a toy) or eat the chew! There are many options to reinforce great choices!

🎾 Checklist

1. Did you review your session?
2. Did you and your dog have fun?
3. What stage did your dog struggle with the most?
4. Is your dog driving in and out of their crate?
5. Did you take the game on the road?

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