

Behavior Medicine**Creating a Safe Haven: Give Your Dog Some Peace and Quiet**

There are many times when our canine friends might prefer a quiet, secluded place to hang out while other activities are occurring elsewhere in our home. New babies, repairmen and houseguests may present such occasions. We need to help our pets learn to be comfortable in solitude.

1. Decide where you will keep the dog. The room must be comfortable, with adequate ventilation, appropriate temperature control, a door that securely closes and, if small children are an issue, locks. A damp, unfinished basement or unheated garage will not do for this purpose. The dog needs to have bedding, a supply of water, toys - preferably novel, and be left with a radio or television on, to mask sounds occurring elsewhere in the house.
2. Start by spending about 5 minutes in the room with the dog and add minutes daily.
3. Give the dog a special treat like a small rawhide, pig's ear, or stuffed Kong. (See brochure.)
4. Remain in room while the dog eats the special treat. Do this for one week.
5. Determine how long it takes the dog to eat the special treat.
6. Begin by leaving the room and standing just outside the closed door for 30 seconds while the dog is enjoying the treat and return to the room.
7. Gradually increase the amount of time spent out of the room, by adding 30 seconds per day, always returning before the dog is scheduled to finish the treat. For example, if it takes 10 minutes for the dog to finish eating, return to the room before 8 minutes have elapsed.
8. You can return with additional Kongs or treats as needed to extend the time the dog can be safely left alone.
9. As the dog becomes more comfortable with being left alone in the room, leave the dog for longer periods of time. Be sure to do this slowly. The point is to *always* return to the room *before* the dog reacts to your absence.
10. The first time you use this area when visitors are expected, make sure that the guests are of the quiet sort and are not staying for a long period of time, no longer than 15 to 20 minutes. Again, time alone must be increased gradually.

The entire process may take months but in the end you will have a dog that enjoys spending time alone.