

# Dog: Alone Time Training Game



## Benefit

This game is the first step toward being able to leave your dog alone without setting off his anxiety. The key is to go slowly and keep it fun. Always practice at times when your dog is relaxed—e.g. not right around actual departures/returns.

The game boils down to this sequence: Have your dog sit-stay or down-stay several feet from the entrance door. Place four small treats on the floor in front of him, but out of his reach. Walk out the door. As you close the door behind you give your dog a release command and allow him to eat the treats.

## What You Need

- Treats like kibble, biscuits, or freeze-dried liver that won't leave marks on furniture. Alternatively, use a few favorite toys.
- A clicker, if you use one. Otherwise, say "yes!" to mark the behavior.
- 5 minutes 3–4 times daily.

## How to Teach It

**Step 1.** Practice stay (sit-stay or down-stay) until your dog can stay while you take a few steps away and then return. This does not have to be at the front door at first. If your dog has a solid sit-stay already, this is great. Skip this step and move on to step 2.

**Step 2.** Have your dog practice the stay command while you place a small piece of food on the floor a few feet in front of him. Go slowly and hover over the food (stay crouched down) so your dog doesn't steal it. Wait until he is relaxed and then give him a release command ("OK," "free," "take it") and let him eat the food.

**Step 3.** Gradually work up to the point where you can place four pieces of food on the floor and stand up before you give the release command. Every dog progresses through this step at his own pace. Practicing this slowly is key to your dog's success.

**Step 4.** Next you're ready to take a step toward the door before releasing your dog. Increase step by step until you can actually walk out the door. Each new step becomes the point at which you give the release command. The steps include: walk up to the door, briefly touch the door knob, rattle the doorknob, open and close the door, go part way through the door, and go completely through the door but leave the door open.

**Step 5.** Once you are ready to close the door and be out of the room for a very brief period, give your dog the four treats plus a long-lasting, very special treat such as a stuffed KONG®, as the Jackpot. At first, close the door for only 10 seconds, then 20 seconds, and so on. Increase the time you remain outside very slowly.

## Tips

- Go slowly enough that your dog doesn't become distressed by your departure.
- The goal is for your dog to be glad to see you go because he only gets these food treats when you play this leaving game. If you see your dog becoming more anxious during this game, stop and contact us.