



## Crate and Rotate

Do you live in a multiple-dog home where some of your dogs don't get along, you're trying to slowly introduce dogs, or maybe your dogs just got into a fight and you're not sure what to do until a professional arrives to help?

Rotating dogs can be stressful for many owners. At first, your dogs may not love being put away while you are home, and it can take time for everyone to adjust to their new routine. Rest assured, separation is a safer and more comfortable alternative for your dogs than fighting or scuffling. Learning to balance meals, exercise, attention, and cuddles can be difficult initially, but separation can be humane and comfortable for everyone when done correctly. The following tips will help set you and your dogs enjoy their new routine.

### 1. Provide each dog with a separate safe space.

Make sure your dogs have separate areas to call their own. Their safe spaces should be behind at least two physical barriers to prevent them from accessing one another. For instance, your dog could be in his crate that is in a room behind a closed door, or the dog could be in a room behind a closed door with a baby gate in the hallway that leads to that room. This will prevent accidents in the event that one of the safety features fails (ie, baby gate comes unattached, dog pushes door open, etc.).

### 2. Provide plenty of physical exercise before your dogs are put away.

Making sure your dog has had a chance to stretch his legs, run, and play is important to ensure that he doesn't get restless when put away. Exercise may also help to reduce stress levels later while you are away. An excellent way to exercise your dog without taking up too much time is by using a flirt pole (we love the Squishy Face brand). This allows your dog to sprint, chase, and hunt a toy. After your hard play, allow your dog to take a few minutes to relax and decrease their heart rate before being put away.

### 3. Let your dog go potty and relax a bit before he is put away.

It may seem obvious, but it can be hard when you're rotating dogs to remember everyone's potty breaks. A trip outside will help ensure that the dog feels ready to nap when put away. Additionally, it is sometimes hard for a dog to calm down once they've just gotten amped up from exercise. Extra time to potty is also a great way to make sure that your dog is getting time to settle down after play.

### 4. Only move one dog when the other dog has been secured.

To keep everyone safe, ensure that your dog is safely contained before moving the second dog. If the dogs don't yet know how to safely interact, it's better to be safe than sorry. In households where there are multiple humans involved in the rotations, having key words such as "ALL CLEAR" or "HOLD" will help ensure everyone communicates effectively and safely.

## 5. Provide soothing items in safe spaces to help keep the dog calm.

If your dog is distressed when separated, reduce stress levels by using the following to help keep your dog busy, happy, and relaxed while alone:

- Block the outside noise:** Your dog may get frustrated if he can hear you and your other dog having fun without him. Turning on a TV or radio in or just outside of your dog's safe space will help drown out the noise and help him relax.
- Calming classical music:** Play music in your dog's safe space to help soothe his anxiety and help block outside noise. Through a Dog's Ear is a playlist specifically designed to decrease anxiety – this playlist can be purchased online or by use of a portable, preprogrammed iCalm Dog speaker.
- Provide comfort items:** Having his favorite bed or blankets in his safe space will help your pup relax and feel at home. Comfort items help set the stage for relaxation so that he can wind down, be comfortable, and relax!

## 6. Keep each dog busy.

Provide your dog with plenty of mental enrichment in his safe space while he's left alone. This will keep him entertained and lower stress levels. To avoid over-feeding, you can use these enrichment games in place of a dog bowl to feed his meals. Some good ideas for mental enrichment:

- Foraging:** Hide yummy treats or dog food around his safe space and let him use his nose to find them. If your dog is crated, try a Paw5 Snuffle Mat.
- Shredding:** Fill any soft cardboard or paper material with yummy treats or dog food and let your dog destroy the item to get the food. Some good items for your dog to shred are folded toilet paper rolls or paper towel rolls, paper bags, and cardboard egg cartons. Help him destroy this at first if he struggles. *\*If your dog has a history of swallowing non-food items, consult your veterinarian before trying this activity.\**
- Chewing:** Give your pup any type of bone that he is allowed to have. A dog-favorite bone is the No Hide bone or bully stick. *\*Be sure to supervise your dog at first with bones and consult a veterinarian with any questions or concerns regarding your dog's safety\**
- Licking:** Satisfy your dog's need to lick by stuffing a KONG Extreme Dog Toy with with cream cheese, braunschweiger, peanut butter, or wet food. You can freeze it to last longer. If your dog has a sensitive tummy, you can mix these items with his regular dog food.

## 7. Keep a routine.

Knowing what is going to happen and when helps both humans and dogs feel less anxious. This helps us track that we are spending equal time with the dogs, and keeps them on a good potty, play, and rest schedule.

## 8. Give yourself a break!

Lastly, and arguably most importantly, take time for self-care. Rotating animals means extra time and attention is spent caring for your pets, and caring for yourself is easy to put last. Always remember that you being mentally, emotionally, and physically healthy means that you are your best for both yourself and for your dogs. Lack of self care could cause burn-out, lethargy, increased frustration, feelings of resentment or anger, and in severe cases, could lead to anxiety and depression. Don't let guilt keep you from doing things you enjoy, such as spending a night out with friends, going to dinner with colleagues, or enjoying a morning coffee by yourself. In fact, we encourage it. Taking care of yourself and your own needs is key.