



Creating a “Safe Haven” for your Dog:

Creating a “Safe Haven” is all about making a specific area the most comfortable, safest, best area on the planet for your dog. It must be “so good”, “so safe” your dog chooses go in there when it is tired, scared, unsure, anxious etc. For your dog to think this, the “safe haven” must:

- a) Be comfortable, soft and warm in winter, cool in summer,
- b) Be big enough for your dog to stretch out and sleep in peace
- c) Have food and water
- d) Have, chew toys, bones, etc. to play with quietly
- e) BE SAFE – your dog must be protected from everything while in the Haven -nothing unpleasant must ever happen in the Safe Haven

They are protected from

- i) scary cats
 - j) scary children
 - k) other dogs
 - l) you and your family (when your dog is tired)
- f) Be the “Best” place ever. Only good things happen occur there special bones, extra yummy food, peace and quiet, special chew toys
 - g) Be placed in a centrally accessible area like the living room or the kitchen of your home. It must not be isolated like in the Laundry or garage.
 - h) Be open at all times during the training so your dog can enter and leave it when they want to.

To successfully create the “Safe Haven” you must also your provide your dog’s entire physiological and emotional needs as far as exercise, food, water, toilet breaks, attention requirements etc. while it is in the “Safe Haven”. Otherwise your dog will quickly see the area as a little prison which will lead to anxiety, distress, barrier frustrations, escape attempts etc.

Benefits of creating a “Safe Haven”.

1. The “Save Haven” gives your dog Security and reduces anxiety – it must become a safe area where your dog chooses to go to when feeling stressed, anxious, unsure, scared etc. so it can feel safe and secure and rest until it feels confident enough to come back out and interact with you.

The “Safe Haven” by definition protects your dog.

2. The “Safe Haven” protects your home from your dog’s (chewing, investigation, toileting).
3. The “Safe Haven” protects people from your dog. (Anxious dogs can bite in unpredictable situations)
5. The “Safe Haven” can become an ideal area to help your dog cope when traveling.



4. The “Safe Haven” facilitates training of proper chewing and elimination by setting your dog up to only chew on what you want them to and to eliminate only where you want them to.

6. The “safe haven” aids your dog’s rapid training and minimizes anxiety and frustration for both your dog and for yourself.

Marking the Safe Haven

1. If your dog is not toilet trained please see the information sheet on Creating A Safe Haven for Puppies.
2. Ensure the “Safe Haven” is located in a quiet corner of the living area of the home so your dog can still be around you but settle and go to sleep. Make sure it is not in an isolated area; remember your dog is a social creature. Often your dog will choose a quiet corner in the family room etc. when it is tired; this is often an ideal place for the Dog Play Pen.
3. Make sure the “Safe Haven” is secure enough to prevent escape by your dog.
4. Ensure the “Safe Haven” is large enough for your dog to stretch out and sleep in, stand up and turn around in etc.
5. Ensure the “Safe haven” contains a sleeping, feeding and drinking area. The water bowl must be spill proof.
6. Make the “safe haven” freely accessible to your dog from the living area and your dog must be able to enter and leave it at will.
7. Make sure the “safe haven” is near a pheromone diffuser (Adaptil).
8. Make sure the “safe haven” is never used to punish your dog nor should it be used as a “time out” area. If you use this technique in training your dog to socially isolate it use the laundry or basement for this “time out” until it is calm.

Often a radio or television in the dog play pen can help mask environmental noise that may startle or scare your dog and trigger barking. This will help calm your dog.

An appropriately sized metal, collapsible cage with a tray floor or a plastic traveling cage, placed in larger play pen works well. Wire cages also allow you to throw treats through the mesh to lure your dog into it.

Teaching your Dog that the “Safe Haven” is the safest, most comfortable best area on the planet.

1. Introduce your dog to the “Save Haven” as early as possible in life. Place your dog near the “safe Haven” and flick yummy treats into the “Save Haven” (or a variety of treats, toys, or food) so your dog is motivated to enter it voluntarily. Encourage your dog to come out as well. Then flick the treats into the safe haven so your dog goes back in. Repeat this multiple times. Using cues like “get into bed” “out you come” can be useful. Do not force your dog let it choose to go in and come out. At this stage the door of the safe haven must always be open.
2. The first introduction to the “Save Haven” should be after a period of play, exercise, and elimination (i.e., when it is time for your dog to rest). If your dog falls asleep place your dog in its “Save Haven” with a soft bed, toy and a treat and leave the door open. Remain quiet (not silent) nearby.



3. If your dog does not fall asleep remain calm, stop playing with your dog and give it a chew toy or bone. Reward quiet investigatory behaviour and calm behaviour by whispering to your dog “good dog”. Ignore any play behaviour or distressed behaviour and remain calm. Eventually your dog will settle down and fall asleep.
4. If your dog is being quiet chewing a toy etc. in the “safe haven” reward it by whispering “good dog”. This is exactly what you want your dog to learn that this is the best place to settled down and chew on a toy.
5. When your dog falls asleep leave the room but remain close enough to hear your dog. Always reward the pet when it is calm with quiet praise. Release your dog when it awakes from its nap, or if it is time for you to wake your dog for feeding, play, or elimination (e.g., prior to your departure).
6. Repeat the entering and exiting the “Save Haven” game a few more times during the day, including each naptime and each time your dog is given a toy or chew with which to play. Always give your dog exercise and a chance to eliminate before practicing the “Save Haven” game. Always let your dog choose to enter and to exit the safe haven without any restrictions.
7. Prior to bedtime, your dog should be exercised, given a final chance to eliminate for the night. The “Save Haven” door must be left open. Sometimes the best way to reduce distress vocalization is to locate your dog play pen in the bedroom.
8. After a little while when your dog happily enters the “Save Haven” when asked to “get into bed” flick treats into the “safe Haven” and close the door momentarily behind it when it goes in after the treats. Open the door when they finish the treat and turn toward the door. Ask them to “come out”. Repeat this game gradually extending the time the door is closed before you ask them to come out. Only extend the time the door is closed if your dog is remaining calm in the safe haven. It is important at this early stage for your dog to believe it has control over the door opening and if it really wanted the door to open it would. It is important to understand the only time the door should be closed is when you are playing this game. (Please look at [Dr Sophia Yin](#) material to help you recognize relaxed behaviour)
9. Always leave the door of the “Save Haven” open when your dog is not attended until he is has totally learnt that what his/her “safe haven” is.
10. Never leave your dog in its “Safe Haven” for longer than it can control itself or it may be forced to eliminate in the “Safe Haven”. If your dog must be left for longer periods, a larger “Safe Haven” area with paper for elimination, a dog litter box, or access to an elimination area outdoors through a dog door will be necessary.
11. When your dog is regularly choosing to go into their “safe haven” for a sleep or a quiet time close the door behind them while you are in the immediate vicinity and keep it closed as long as your dog remains calm. This should coincide with being able to extend the length of time the door is closed when playing the “entering and exiting” the “safe haven” game. Once your dog is to this point you should be able to close the door of the “safe haven” for longer and longer periods of time. Remember you must make sure the dog does not see the “safe haven” as a prison.
12. Some dogs may adapt quicker to “Safe Haven” training by having your dog sleep in the “Safe Haven” at night.
13. As time goes on you will be able to confine your dog to the “safe haven” for extended periods of time. If you are leaving your dog in the “Safe Haven” be certain to determine how often it needs to eliminate and how long it can be confined without social contact or exercise. While some dogs may manage for a



full work day, it is likely in most dogs' best interest to arrange for a midday dog walker if you are going to be gone for more than 4 – 6 hours.

Problems with teaching your dog about Safe Havens

If your dog is particularly anxious or eliminates in its "Safe Haven", then it may be an indication that some part of the "Safe Haven" education has been progressed through too quickly and you will need to return to beginning of this education program.

1. It may be possible that your dog is being left in its "Safe Haven" longer than it can control elimination. If this is the case, confine your dog for a shorter time and be certain that it has eliminated prior to "Safe Haven".
2. If the "Safe Haven" is overly large some dogs may sleep in one end and eliminate in the other. If this is the case consider a smaller "Safe Haven" or a divider.
3. If your dog is anxious or attempts to escape when left in its "Safe Haven", then it may not have been accustomed to its "Safe Haven" in a gradual and positive enough manner. You will need to return to the beginning of this education program and ensure it is never used for punishment.
4. If your dog has previously escaped from its "Safe Haven", this may encourage further escape attempts. If this is the case return to the beginning of this program and change the safe have to a more secure one. It may then be necessary to supervise your dog in its "Safe Haven" for a period of time to help reduce anxiety and deter further escape attempts.
5. Some dogs are particularly resistant to crating. These dogs may adapt better to other types of "Safe Haven" such as a pen, dog run, small room, or barricaded area (e.g., using a child gate).
6. It may be necessary to rule out any form of anxiety disorder like separation anxiety prior to creating a "Safe Haven" or if this education program is not progressing as rapidly as you think it should.

A floor plan for a Dog "Safe Haven".

