

## Managing restricted exercise and rest

Consider what changes may need to be in place when your dog is on restricted rest, such as:

### Changes in sleeping arrangements (stairs)

Dogs that usually sleep upstairs with you may need to be carried up and down the stairs, or in the case of larger dogs, they may need to be able to settle downstairs during the restricted rest period. Perhaps consider sleeping downstairs with your dog for the first few nights to help them adjust.

### Furniture

If your dog jumps on and off furniture, this may need to be restricted, can you use baby gates or a pen around the sofa to restrict access while still allowing your dog freedom to move around the home where appropriate?

### Flooring

Slippery floors may need to be covered during recovery with non-slip rugs to allow your dog to access the home safely.

### Vet collars and body suits/ onesies

If your dog is going to need to wear a plastic vet collar/ cone following the operation, it is helpful to get one beforehand. You can help your dog adjust to wearing one by placing it on the floor, wide end facing up and dropping food rewards into it like a bowl, your dog will hopefully voluntarily put their head in the wide end to eat the reward.

Dog onesies/suits are incredibly useful for covering operation sites/stitches. These are often tolerated much better than a vet collar and can be introduced before the operation. Just be aware that some dogs can still chew their stitches through the onesie so they need to be supervised when not wearing the vet collar. Equafleece make onesies with back legs in as well and have the option to add a zip in some of their products to make getting these on and off easier. Ideally a thin, stretchy suit is needed so you don't need to be able to bend your dog's legs too much getting it on and off. Special suits with poppers are available for dogs recovering from neutering. Please take your vets advice on whether a suit would be suitable.

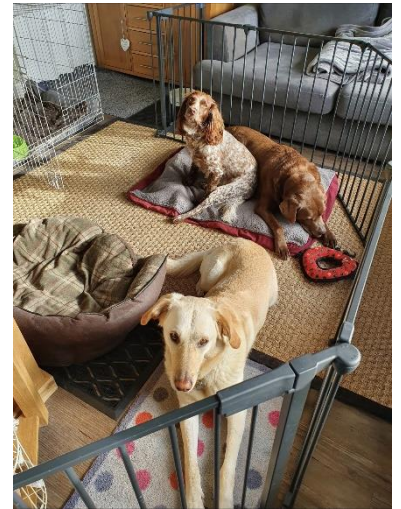
### Other dogs/pets in the home/ distractions

If you have other dogs or pets that your dog interacts with you may need to be able to separate them if they play/chase etc to prevent injury. You can practice separation before the operation, so everyone is used to this beforehand.

If your dog runs at the door etc when the doorbell etc goes, consider ways to help prevent this during recovery.

### Toileting

Accessing the garden may be difficult if you have steps etc, can you make a temporary accessible toileting area? Your dog may need to be on lead for toilet trips initially so again introduce toilet trips on lead beforehand if you think this may be a problem for your dog.



## Weight management

If you are concerned that your dog may gain weight during the restricted exercise period, try to find some safe, healthy, low-fat alternatives your dog likes for you to use as food rewards. This may include small pieces of vegetables, fruits or specifically low-fat treats. If your dog likes their normal food, you may be able to use a small portion of their daily allowance for crate games and enrichment.

## Crate training

If you will need to use a crate or a pen, introduce this beforehand, even if your dog was used to using one as a puppy. Speak to your vet regarding crate size but it's usually helpful to have the largest one possible to allow your dog enough room to sit, stand (without their head touching the top of the crate), change positions, stretch out and have room for food and water bowls.



Start by placing the crate in an area of the home your dog is comfortable with, some dogs settle better where they can see all entry and exit points, so they don't feel isolated. You may need more than one crate so you can have one in different rooms if your dog isn't comfortable settling away from you.

Make the crate comfortable and inviting by adding a comfy but easy to wash bedding, find a way of securing a water bowl or use an anti-spill bowl to prevent spills. Some dogs may prefer the crate to be partially covered.

In the weeks running up to your dog's operation, feed them their meals in the crate, any treats or chews, new toys etc you give them, leave them in the crate for your dog to find.

Actively teach your dog to go into their crate and lie down. Use food rewards to lure them into the crate, then drop the reward in the crate once they are either partially in or fully in the crate. Build up the time they remain in there for by dropping food rewards in succession. Always allow your dog to exit the crate when they want to during training to avoid negative associations.

Once they can go in and out of their crate and remain in there for a short period of time, start to lure them into a down position. It is helpful to teach your dog this before trying to ask them to lie down in their crate. Use a food reward, go to their nose and slowly move it downwards between their front paws, they should follow the food (allow them to lick the food as they go) and drop into a down position, at this point release the reward. Once they are in the down position, drop small food rewards between their front paws in succession to build up the time they are able to lie down in their crate for.

You can then start to close the door, try closing it halfway, dropping a reward in, then opening it again, until you can close the door and your dog is comfortable with this. Add in pulling the catches across, drop a reward in and then immediately open the door. Build up the time your dog is comfortable with the door being shut by dropping a reward in frequently.

Now, can you move away from the crate and return to drop another reward in without your dog becoming concerned? Can you go out of sight and come back again to drop another reward in?

Don't rush these steps, go at your dog's pace.

Ensure your dog isn't wearing anything that can get caught on the crate and cause injury.

## Keeping your dog occupied when on restricted rest

### Enrichment

There are lots of puzzle type games available to help keep dogs mentally stimulated while on rest. The suitability of these will depend on what operation your dog has had, for example, games that involve using their paws to move them won't be suitable for dogs who have had an operation on their front leg. That said you can adapt how you use these by placing them on your lap or something raised to dog nose height to encourage your dog to use their nose instead of a paw. If they need to do these lying down, you can sit by the open crate door with the puzzle on your lap.



Licki mats are a great tool, you can spread a huge variety of things on these, such as mashed fruit/veg, high quality wet dog food, different flavoured pate (available from Jr pet products, Anco and other places), dog friendly peanut butter, natural yoghurt, paste (like Arden Grange liver paste) etc. Dogs may chew the mat so supervise.

Snuffle mats, you can hide food in these and give your dog a nice sniffing challenge. Once they get the hang of this, food can be broken into smaller pieces and hidden in the mat.



Toy swaps and collecting items from a walk (courtesy of Dr Amber Batson at Understand Animals). If they are missing their dog pals, ask to borrow some toys from them so they can have a good sniff of their pals from afar. If your dog can't go out for walks, you can collect items and bring them back for your dog to investigate.

### Chewing

Chewing can really help your dog settle. Having a large variety of healthy natural chews available ready for crate rest is helpful. Natural edible chews are available from raw food shops/local stockists and online (Jr pet products, Anco pick and mix etc).

Stuffed Kongs/toppls may be an option too, your dog's dry food can be soaked and mashed into them (and frozen to help them last a bit longer). There is a huge variety of stuffing recipes online that include things like fruits, veg, meats, natural yoghurt etc.



## **Crate games**

Scent work and training is a great way to mentally stimulate your dog. Here are a few ideas of games you can play with your dog while they are in their crate (keep in mind how your dog may interact with these games as to whether they are suited to their recovery):

### Hidden toy or food item

Take a small flowerpot/cup and hide either a food reward or their toy underneath, ask them to 'find it' and help them lift the pot they put their nose on/investigate to see what's underneath.

Build up to several pots with only one with the food or toy underneath.

A similar game can be played with the plastic eggs that you can put food inside, then have them guess from several eggs which one has the food in (be careful that they aren't going to swallow them).

### [Crate Game Find It - YouTube](#)

### Empty toilet/kitchen rolls / egg cartons/ muffin tin

Hide food in an empty cardboard roll and fold the ends over, place these in their crate for them to rip up and find the food inside.

Egg cartons can be either closed with food in or stacked to make it slightly trickier. If your dog is unsure, leave them unfolded and place light screwed up paper over the holes with food underneath.

This game can also be played with a muffin tin with food in each hole and a light toy placed on top. Again if your dog is unsure, children's ball pit balls or screwed up paper balls can be used as these are often easy to move with a light touch.



### [Crate Game Toilet Roll Tubes - YouTube](#)

### Towel / mat game

Fold/ roll food rewards into a small towel or mat, encourage your dog to nose the towel or mat out of the way to reach the food. You may need to start with one fold in the corner / one roll of the mat.

### Which hand

Have a food reward in one hand and place both fists in front of your dog, open the hand your dog indicates has the food in.

### Hand touch

Have a food reward in a closed fist, present both closed fists to your dog at nose height but before they think about it too much, open your empty hand, they are likely to touch it with their nose to



investigate, when they do say 'good' and open your hand with the food in. Your dog will soon learn to bop your open hand to get the other hand with the reward in to open.

You can progress this game by teaching them to bop a particular hand on a cue like 'left' or 'right'.

Start by presenting your left hand, each time they touch it with their nose say 'left' and reward them. Once they have got this swap hands. Present your right hand only, each time they touch their nose to this hand say 'right' and reward them.

Over a few sessions, you should be able to hold out both hands and say 'left' or 'right' and they nose touch the corresponding hand.

### Nose target

You can progress the hand touch to a target, this could be a post it note, wooden spoon etc.

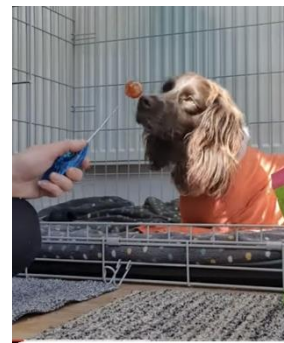
Hold the item behind your back, then present it to your dog, as soon as they go to sniff/investigate the item say 'good' and reward them.

Repeat this several times, your dog should start to nose the item each time it's presented.

Once your dog is confident with this, add the 'touch' cue when they touch the item.

It can then be moved round their crate for them to challenge them a bit more.

### [Crate Game Nose Target - YouTube](#)



Crate Games · 7/7  
Amy: Behaviour is Communication

### Retrieve to hand

Find an item your dog likes to pick up but is safe for them to do so (don't use a tennis ball or something they are very stimulated by/associate with lots of chase games. Something like a tissue or a sock may be suitable if they don't try to swallow it). Sitting in front of the crate, place the item next to them, if they show any interest in the item say 'good' and reward them from your flat outstretched hand.

Once your dog is consistently poking at the item for a reward, try waiting to see if they offer putting their teeth on the item, as they go say 'good' and reward them on a flat outstretched hand.

If your dog is putting their teeth around the item, try waiting to see if they then offer picking the item up, again reward on a flat hand.

Before long your dog will be picking the item up and moving towards your hand with it to get the reward and you have the start of a retrieve to hand.

You can then introduce different items and repeat the process.

### [Crate Game Retrieve - YouTube](#)



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### Nose in

Find something that your dog is able to easily put their nose into e.g. a small ring/hoop, cardboard cut out, paper cup cut up so there's no bottom on it.

Hold the ring out at dog nose height, with the other hand use a food reward to lure their nose through the hole towards you. Your dog should start to place their nose through the ring for the reward.

Once they are confident with this, pretend you have a reward in your fingers and repeat, as soon as their nose goes through the ring say 'good' and reward. This is to reduce needing the food as a lure.

Over several sessions your dog should then start to offer putting their nose into the ring without you needing to tempt them with your other hand. Keep saying 'good' and rewarding them each time they do it.

If you'd like to work on them holding their nose there for slightly longer, hold off on saying 'good' for slightly longer to see if you get a longer nose in.

[Crate Game Nose In - YouTube](#)



Crate Games · 4/7

### Chin rest

With your dog in front of you, cup one hand as if you are going to place it under their chin, with the other hand take a food reward to their nose and lure their head over your hand so their chin touches it. As soon as their chin touches your hand say 'good' and give them the reward.

Over time your dog should start to offer moving their chin to your hand, each time they do say 'good' and reward.

[Crate Game Chin Rest - YouTube](#)



Crate Game Chin Rest

### Paw target

Starting with a coaster or lid, hide a food reward underneath it and hold the coaster/lid still encourage your dog to try and get it out. They may nudge it to start with but are likely to then try using their paw to scratch at the coaster/lid, as soon as they do so say 'good' and lift the lid so they can eat the reward.

Repeat as above, over time you will be able to just hold the coaster/lid with no reward underneath and say 'good' and reward when your dog paws at it. Then start to place the coaster/lid down without holding it, and reward your dog for pawing at it. Add a cue like 'push' as they touch their paw to the target.

You can advance this by making a scratch board to aid in trimming nails or generalise their paw target to other items. Hold the coaster/lid on top of whatever it is you'd like to introduce and gradually remove it.

[Crate Game Scratch/Paw - YouTube](#)