

## Shape Get in the Box



**Why:** Box games encourage mental and physical flexibility and give your dog courage to try something on its own.

**First rule of box games:** Don't call the dog, don't pat the box, don't chat, don't encourage the dog, and don't "help" him.

**Rule Two:** "Do something on your own, and I will click," is a toughie for humans as well as dogs. If you have already trained your dog by conventional methods, the dog may be respecting the general rule, "Wait to be told what to do." In that case, the box game is especially valuable, and the first tiny steps are especially exciting—although they would be invisible to an onlooker, and may right now seem invisible to you.

### Part One: "Get the Game"

- ⌘ Take an ordinary cardboard box, any size. Cut the sides down to about three inches, and put the box on the floor.
- ⌘ Click the dog for looking at the box. Treat.
- ⌘ If the dog goes near or past the box, even by accident, click.
- ⌘ Next, after you click, toss the treat near the box or hand it to your dog.
- ⌘ Remember, never treat without clicking first, and always click for a reason: for some action of the dog.
- ⌘ If the dog steps toward the box to get the treat, click the step and toss another treat.
- ⌘ If he steps into the box, great, click again, even if he is eating his previous treats, and offer him another treat in your hand.
- ⌘ If the dog is reluctant to step into the box, and so doesn't eat that treat, no worries, the treats build up to a jackpot for when he does step in.
- ⌘ End the first session with a "click for nothing" and a jackpot consisting of either a handful of treats, or a free grab at the whole bowl. That'll get him thinking. The next time that cardboard box comes out, he will be alert to new possibilities.

**Part Two:** Either in the same session or several sessions later, gradually raise your criteria to only rewarding if your puppy gets all 4 paws in the box.:

Remember to click WHILE the behavior is going on, not after the dog stops. As soon as you click, the dog will stop, of course, to get his treat and the dog will do that behavior again, or some version of it, to try to get you to click again. You do not lose the behavior by interrupting it with a click.