

Crate Training

Crate training provides a safe place for your dog to go - it is not punishment when done correctly. It becomes the dog's safe place where he chooses to go to relax and nap.



Benefits to Crate Training

- **Housetraining:** Teaches your dog to hold it when unsupervised.
- **Chew training:** Stops your dog from chewing anything except appropriate chew toys.
- **Settling:** Helps your dog settle down when alone and inactive.
- **Kenneling:** Your dog may need to stay in a crate during travel or when visitors come over.

Picking a Crate

There are wire, collapsible crates as well as plastic crates called airline kennels. Fabric crates are only for when you are present since it would be very easy for a dog to escape. Whichever kind you pick, make sure it is big enough for your dog to stand up and turn around in. Too big of a crate might encourage your dog to use one end as a bathroom and the other as a bed.

Making the Crate His Happy Place

Set the crate up in a place where the family hangs out, like the living room. Put a soft blanket in the crate and some of his favorite toys. If your dog is timid, covering the crate with a sheet or blanket can make it seem like a cozy den. Never use the crate as punishment; the crate really should be his happy place.

Phase 1: The First Day

1. Begin crate training the day you bring your new dog. At times when your dog isn't looking, drop a few treats into the crate so that he'll discover the goodies on his own.
2. Feed your dog his meal in the crate. If your dog is readily entering the crate on his own, put the food dish all the way at the back of the crate. If your dog doesn't want to go in, put the dish only part way in. Push the dish a little farther back each time you feed him. Don't close the door yet.

Phase 2: The Next Few Days

1. Start teaching your dog to enter the crate on command. Say "go to bed" or "kennel up," throw in a treat, and then praise your dog when he goes in and eats the treat. Repeat this many times.
2. Next, switch it up by saying the command then waiting for your dog to enter before throwing the treat. Don't crack and throw the treat in before he goes in on his own.

When your dog is happily going into the crate on command, it's time to move on to Phase 3.



Phase 3: Closing the Door

1. Give your dog the command to enter the crate. This time, close the door and feed him treats through the gate for a minute or two before opening the door. Do this several times.
2. Next, practice walking around the crate and around the room while your dog is closed inside. Throw him a treat every so often. After a few minutes, open the door and let him out.
3. Now it's time to add duration (longer time spent in the crate). Stuff a KONG with something extra special and put on a favorite movie. Set up the crate next to the couch and tell your dog to enter. When he does, give him the KONG, close the crate door, and sit down to watch the movie. Leave the room a few times, but come back within a minute or two. Ignore any noise from your dog. At the end of the movie, if your dog is quiet and settled in the crate, let him out. If he's whining, barking, or pawing at the door, wait until he's quiet.
4. Several times throughout the day, tell him to go back in, reward with a treat, and let him back out with closing the door at all.
5. Spend a few days practicing locking your dog in the crate **while you're still at home**, going about your usual business. Once your dog is going in the crate without a fuss and no longer barks or whines, you can start leaving the house.

Phase 4: Leaving the House

1. In the first session, leave the house many times by stepping outside for just 1 to 10 seconds.
2. Over the next few sessions, gradually increase the time you're gone. Go from 1 minute to 5 minutes to 10, 15, and 30 minutes. Then increase it to 1 hour, then 2, 3, and 4 hours.

Crating While Gone

Tire your dog out with lots of exercise and training before longer absences. When you leave, don't make a big deal about it. Praise your dog briefly, give him a treat for entering the crate and then leave quietly. When you return home, don't reward your dog for excited behavior by responding to him in an excited, enthusiastic way. Keep arrivals low key. Continue to crate your dog for short periods from time to time when you're home so he doesn't associate crating with being left alone.

Crating at Night

Put your dog in the crate using your regular command and a treat. Initially, it may be a good idea to put the crate in your bedroom or nearby in a hallway, especially if you have a puppy. Puppies often need to go outside to eliminate during the night, and you'll want to be able to hear your puppy when he whines to be let outside. Older dogs, too, should initially be kept nearby so that crating doesn't become associated with being separated from the family. Once your dog is sleeping comfortably through the night with his crate near you, you can begin to gradually move it to the location you prefer.