



Crate Training Your Dog

Crate training is a very useful tool for a variety of situations. If you have a new dog or puppy, you can use the crate to limit their access to the house until they learn what they can and can't chew on and where to appropriately eliminate. It will also prevent your dog from engaging in unwanted behaviors. A crate is a safe way of transporting your dog in the car and gives you the ability to take places where they can't run freely. If you properly train your dog to use a crate, it will become a safe place where they will be happy to spend time.

Choosing a Crate

Crates may be made of plastic or metal and come in a variety different sizes and styles. They can be purchased through most pet supply stores and online through retailers like Chewy and Amazon. Your dog crate should be large enough so that your dog can stand up, turn around and lie down comfortably, but not much bigger. Although it's tempting to purchase an oversized crate to give your pup more room, doing so can derail the potty-training process by giving your pup the space to go to the bathroom at one end while staying dry in the other.

How to Crate Train: Step by Step

It's important to keep two things in mind while crate training. The crate should always be associated with something pleasant and training should take place in a series of small steps – don't go too fast!

1. **Introduce the Crate** - Start off the crate training process by keeping the crate door open and letting your pup explore it at their own pace. Toss a treat inside and praise when they go in to eat it, then give another while in the crate. At this stage, keep the door open. Practice this step as many times as necessary for your dog to get comfortable in the crate. The choice to go into the crate is up to your pup, don't force them if they seem reluctant.
2. **Practice Closing the Door** - Once your pup has made a positive association to going into the crate, they'll be ready for slightly longer sessions inside. First, have a play session with your dog and take them outside for a potty break as it will help them settle down when it's crate time. Then, provide a lightly stuffed busy toy for them to enjoy inside the crate. Stay nearby as they enjoy the goodies and experiment with closing the door while your pup is enjoying the toys and treats inside. Let your dog out right after they finish the treats. Again, keep at this step until your dog seems relaxed and shows no signs of stress inside the crate.
3. **Step Away Briefly** - In subsequent closed-door sessions, try leaving the room once your dog is focused on the toy. Listen at the door for whines or barks that tell you your pup is ready to come out. But at this stage, your dog may surprise you by settling into the crate easily. If you time your play session, potty break and crate time properly, you might just return to discover a napping pup in the crate!
4. **Work Up to Longer Stays** - If your dog is ok with you stepping away briefly, try leaving for increasing amounts of time: one minute, then five minutes, then 10. If your pup remains content inside, try leaving the house for a short period of time.

Tips and Tricks

- Always give your dog a potty break before putting them in the crate as well as immediately after letting them out of the crate.
- Don't crate your dog for too long. Doing so might force them to soil inside.
- Feeding your dog's meals in their crate with the door open can help to make it a positive spot. If they're reluctant to eat inside, place the bowls next to the crate for a few meals, then just inside of it, then finally, at the back of the crate.
- Remember that there's a difference between "frustration" noises and "I gotta go" noises. If you've just returned from a potty trip, a dog whining in the crate for the first few minutes is likely just settling in.
- The crate should never be used for punishment. Remember, the most important aspect of crate training is ensuring that your pup thinks it's a fantastic place to hang out!