



Crate Training

Owners are often unsure whether they need to crate train their puppies or newly adopted dogs or whether to simply confine them in a dog-proofed area during the early weeks or months following adoption. Here is some information to determine if crate training is for you:

Housetraining: Prompts the dog to hold his/her bladder and bowels when unsupervised to expedite housetraining.

Chew-training: Prevents the dog from chewing furniture, walls, and anything else except the chew toys he is crated with so good habits automatically form from the beginning.

Settling down: Patterns dog to be inactive when alone.

Owner as a good guy: By decimating house-training and chew-training mistakes, dog partially “self-trains,” reducing amount of reprimanding and bad-guy stuff for owner.

Preparation for possible confinement: Dogs that are used to close confinement are less likely to be stressed when caged during a hospital stay or travel.

How to Get Them Used to the Crate

You can't just throw the dog in the crate and expect them to adjust. That would be traumatic. Early association is important and often lasting. Make the crate comfy with a nice pad or blanket, situate it in a high traffic area like the kitchen and, whenever the dog isn't looking, drop a couple of treats in the back. Don't point these out to them; rather let them be discovered on their own. Feed meals in there, always with the door open. Using heavy string, tie an attractive stuffed chew toy to the rear inside so that the dog must lie in the crate to chew on it.

After a few days of this, start teaching the dog to enter and exit on command. Say “into bed” or “into the crate,” throw in a treat, praise as the dog goes in and eats the treat and then order them out with the command of your choice. Encourage them to come out and, when they do, praise them (no food treat for exiting).

Repeat this a few times and then change the order of events slightly: instead of throwing the treat into the crate after you say, “into bed,” wait for them to go in on their own before dropping in the treat. If the dog doesn't enter on command, simply wait. Do not command them a second time and do not crack and throw in the treat. You can encourage them in with hand gestures but even this is riskier than simply waiting.



If they don't go in, end the training session without comment. Try another session in a little while, still holding the reward until the dog goes in on their own. When they do (and they all do eventually so hang in there), give them the treat, do a few more rewarded reps and then end the session. Always leave the dog wanting more.

When the dog is going in and out on command, you are ready to try the first lock-in. Play the in/out of the crate game, only now close the door after they have gone in and feed treats through the grate for a minute or two before opening the door. Do this several times. Then practice walking around the crate and around the room while they are locked inside, giving treats occasionally and then, after a couple of minutes, opening the door and letting them out. Make the whole thing a positive experience for them. The next step is to add some real duration.

Give them a couple of stuffed chew toys with something extra special. Set up the crate next to your comfy chair and sit down to watch one of your favorite movies after you have directed the dog into their crate.

When they go in, give a chew toy, close the crate door and watch the movie. Leave the room a few times to get him used to being left alone but always come back within a few minutes or so. The first experience being locked in the crate for this length of time must be an overwhelmingly easy and good one. Any noise, agitation or tantrum from the dog should be ignored. At the end of the movie, if the dog is quiet and settled in the crate, simply open the door and order him out.

Under no circumstances will you open the door to the crate if the dog is misbehaving; otherwise, you are conditioning that behavior. If you do not like it, do not reward it. When you do open the door, don't gush and hug the dog. Behave very neutrally. All the good stuff should happen while they are IN the crate, behaving nicely.

Once they are out, order them right back in for a food treat or two without closing the door before you finish your training session. If they refuse to go in, don't give up and keep trying, reward them and get your in/out exercise polished up again.

Now spend a few days locking the dog in the crate when you're at home, going about your usual business. Ignore or reprimand any noise and provide interesting crate puzzles, chew toys each time. When the dog is going in without a fuss and no longer distress focalizing, you may



start leaving the house. Leave for one to ten seconds repeatedly for the first session.

Then, over the next few sessions gradually extend the time you are gone, from a minute to five minutes to ten, fifteen, thirty, an hour, two, three, and four hours. Throw in some short ones in between to mix it up. Depart and arrive without any fanfare. Tire the dog out with vigorous exercise and training before the longest absences. It is important to gradually condition the dog and being in the crate this way before using it in your day-to-day life.

Things to Keep in Mind While Crate Training

A dog that is trained to be content in a crate can be kept safe when traveling in a car, visiting someone else's home, or being transported in an airplane. Some dogs really take to the crate, preferring to sleep in it or take refuge there when things get too hectic. Other dogs are never happy in the crate but will tolerate it when necessary. Still other dogs panic when closed in a crate. If done correctly your dog will come to appreciate the crate as their own space to relax and feel at home.

Choose the proper size crate: The crate should allow enough room for standing, sitting, and stretching out, but you don't want the crate to be so big that your dog has enough room to make one section of the crate the bathroom and the other the sleeping area. If you only want to buy one crate, get one that will be large enough for your dog as an adult and block off an end of it while your dog is still small.

Make the crate comfortable: Find an old blanket or towel to fold up and place on the floor of the crate. If your dog already has a bed that they're accustomed to, you can use that too. The idea here is not only to create a comfortable place for your dog to lie, but also to remind your dog that the crate is for sleeping and comfort, not for going to the bathroom.

Provide water: This is especially important if you're planning on leaving your dog confined for more than two hours. If you're worried about your dog making a mess, invest in a small hamster-type water bottle and fill it with ice water.

Make the crate appealing: Place your dog's favorite toys inside at the far end of the crate, provided they are sturdy and large enough that your dog will not choke.

Keep the crate in a high-traffic area: By keeping the crate in an area with a lot of people, such as a living room or kitchen, your dog will associate the crate with being surrounded by people rather than completely alone and isolated. Allow the crate to sit there for a little while before you ask your dog to go into it. This way, the crate will become a normal piece of furniture in your house rather than a strange object. At night the crate should be kept in your bedroom.



Once again, being around you will comfort the puppy and your sleeping patterns will influence your puppy's as well.

Be mindful of the duration: A 2-month-old puppy must have a break after 2 hours. A dog older than 6 months should be able to go up to 6 hours. However, start small and only do short durations in the crate, before building up to longer stretches.

If you need more information or if you have additional questions, please call our support team at 602-273-6852 ext. 105.