



## Crate Training

First off don't think of Crate Training as something horrible to do to your dog. Dogs don't feel like humans do about small areas. A crate to a dog is like their den. A nice, safe place to relax, sleep, and be safe.

Now, not all dogs can be crate trained. Some dogs are claustrophobic, and cannot adjust to such a small area. But most dogs learn to love their crates as long as you introduce it to them slowly and only with positive reinforcement, such as treats and praise. Never should a crate be used to punish your dog.

A crate can be used for:

- Managing your dog so it doesn't wander through your house and chew up something.
- House-training your dog
- Traveling with your dog
- A safe place for your dog to sleep
- Times you are away from your home for up to 4 hours.
- Puppy management

Your crate, or dog's den, should be big enough for your dog to stand up in, turn around in and stretch out when he lays down. If the crate is too big, and you are using it for house-training, the dog will relieve himself at a far corner and lay down in the opposite corner. It's best, if you have a young dog that is still growing, to purchase a crate that is big enough for the dog when it is full grown. You can use a cardboard box to block the extra room until the dog gets bigger.

Feel free to put a blanket in the crate with your dog. But be aware that some dogs like to chew up their blankets. If so, just take the blanket out. Your dog will be fine laying in the crate without a blanket. Sometimes a bath mat works instead of a blanket.

When you first get your crate, place the crate in a bedroom. Dogs do better when they sleep with a member of the family. Remember dogs are pack animals and like to be with you, their pack member. If the bedroom is an awkward place for the initial training phase, listed below, feel free to move the crate from room to room.

Feed your dog all it's meals in the crate. Fix your dog's meal and place it inside the crate near the door, leaving the door open. Leave the dog alone and let it go to it's food. If the dog doesn't eat his food, then pick up his bowl and try again later. Don't worry about your dog not eating. When he gets hungry enough he will. Progressively, move your dogs food bowl further into the crate until your dog goes completely inside his crate to eat. Once your dog does this, then you can close the door while he eats. When he is finished eating let him out of the crate.

Once your dog feels comfortable enough eating his meals in the crate, start giving your dog a voice command like "kennel", or "go to bed" or "crate" indicating you would like it to go into its crate. As you give this command, throw a yummy treat into the crate to encourage your dog to go back in. You can also smear peanut butter on the back wall of the crate to further entice your dog to go in. Now close the door. Wait a few seconds, then open the door. When your dog comes out, play for a few minutes and do it again.

Continue to do this, expanding on the length of time your dog is in the crate. Eventually start leaving the room and then the house for short periods of time.

Make sure to put a good chew toy in the crate for your dog to play with. A “Kong” toy or “Goodie Ship” toy can be found at a local pet store. They are rubber toys that have holes in them for putting peanut butter, cream cheese or food into. They are nearly indestructible and they keep your dog busy chewing.

A well exercised dog is also a happier dog. If you will be crating your dog for a few hours make sure to give him a good amount of exercise before you leave. Usually, your dog will then chew his toy for a bit, then sleep. Making his crate stay much more enjoyable.

As you take your dog in and out of his crate, make sure you are very nonchalant about the event. It’s best to stay low keyed and calm. If your dog whines while in the crate ignore him. Remember to praise him for being quiet. Your dog is allowed out of the crate only when he is quiet. If your dog barks and whines incessantly, and ignoring him for 15 minutes doesn’t help, you can try using a towel and throwing it against the crate, or making a noise so that the barking/whining stops. Or use a squirt bottle of water, set on stream, and spray at your dog while he is whining or barking. Try not to have your dog see you do this. It’s best if it comes from “no where”. The second your dog is quiet, praise him and give him a treat through the crate door. Once he is quiet you can let him out. It’s best to practice quiet in the crate any time of day you can and as often as you can. That way, your dog never knows when he might get out of his crate but he learns that being in his crate calm and quiet gets all sorts of praise and attention from you.

If you are using your crate for house-training your adult dog, make sure you let the dog out often to go potty. Older dogs can usually hold their bladder and bowel for a few hours. But remember they always have to relieve themselves in the morning after a full nights sleep, within 15-30 minutes of drinking water and within an hour of eating. Quickly and calmly put a leash on your dog and take them outside to the spot you’d like them to go potty. Tell your dog to go potty and wait patiently. As soon as your dog relieves himself, praise him and give him a treat. Don’t forget to play with him. If your dogs just sniffs around and doesn’t go potty, put him back in the crate and try again 15 minutes later. Eventually, your dog will get the idea. So stick with it. Once your dog has gone potty and you can watch him afterwards, he doesn’t have to go back into his crate. Remember the crate is only a training aid for when you cannot monitor your dog.

Puppies have to go potty right after they eat and right after they sleep. They cannot hold their bladders very long so make sure you take them out of the crate often. At about three months puppies can usually sleep through the night in their crates. At about 6 months, puppies can hold their bladder and bowel for about 2-4 hours during the day.

Make sure to let your dogs or puppies out of their crates often during the day. A crate is a training tool, not a place to live. Your dog should be with you, out of the crate playing and spending time with you. The crate should be used when you can’t keep an eye on your dog or when it’s time to sleep.

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