



CRATE TRAINING

Crate training can take days or weeks depending on your dog's age, temperament, and past experiences. 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.

STEP 1: INTRODUCE YOUR DOG TO THE CRATE

Place the crate in an area of your house where the family spends a lot of time, such as the family room. Put a soft blanket or towel in the crate. Take the door off and let the dog explore the crate at their leisure. Some dogs will be naturally curious and start sleeping in the crate right away. If your dog isn't as enthusiastic:

- Bring them over to the crate and talk to them in a happy tone of voice.
- Encourage your dog to enter the crate by dropping small food treats nearby, then just inside the door, and finally, all the way inside the crate. If they refuse to go all the way in at first, that's OK; don't force them to enter.
- Continue tossing treats into the crate until your dog will walk calmly all the way into the crate to get the food. If they aren't interested in treats, try tossing a favorite toy in the crate. This step may take a few minutes or as long as several days.

STEP 2: FEED YOUR DOG MEALS IN THE CRATE

After introducing your dog to the crate, begin feeding them their regular meals near the crate. This will create a positive association with the crate.

- If your dog is readily entering the crate when you begin Step 2, place the food dish all the way at the back of the crate.



- If they remain reluctant to enter, put the dish only as far inside as they will readily go without becoming fearful or anxious. Each time you feed them, place the dish a little further back in the crate.
- Once your dog is standing comfortably in the crate to eat their meal, you can close the door while they're eating. The first time you do this; open the door as soon as they finish their meal. With each successive feeding, leave the door closed a few minutes longer, until they're staying in the crate for 10 minutes or so after eating.

(If they begin to whine to be let out, you may have increased the length of time too quickly. Consider leaving them in the crate for a shorter time period. If they do whine or cry in the crate, don't let them out until they stop. Otherwise, they'll learn that the way to get out of the crate is to whine, so they'll keep doing it.)

STEP 3:

PRACTICE WITH LONGER CRATING PERIODS

After your dog is eating their regular meals in the crate with no sign of fear or anxiety, you can confine them for short time periods while you're home.

- Call them over to the crate and give them a treat.
- Give them a command to enter, such as "kennel." Encourage them by pointing to the inside of the crate with a treat in your hand. After your dog enters the crate, praise them, give them the treat, and close the door.
- Sit quietly near the crate for five to ten minutes, and then go into another room for a few minutes. Return, sit quietly again for a short time, and then let them out of the crate. (Repeat this process several times a day, gradually increasing the length of time you leave them in the crate and the length of time you're out of sight.)
- Once your dog will stay quietly in the crate for about 30 minutes with you mostly out of sight, you can begin leaving them crated when you're gone for short time periods and/or letting them sleep there at night. This may take several days or weeks.

STEP 4:

CRATE YOUR DOG WHEN YOU LEAVE

After your dog can spend about 30 minutes in the crate without becoming anxious or afraid, you can begin leaving them crated for short periods while you leave the house.

- Put them in the crate using your regular command and a treat. You might want to leave them with a few safe toys in the crate.
- Vary the moment during your "getting ready to leave" routine that you put your dog in the crate. Although they shouldn't be crated for a long time before you leave, you can crate them anywhere from five to 20 minutes prior to leaving.
- Don't make your departures emotional and prolonged—they should be matter-of-fact. Praise your dog briefly, give them a treat for entering the crate, and leave quietly.

When you return home, don't reward your dog for excited behavior by responding to them in an enthusiastic way. Keep arrivals low-key to avoid increasing their anxiety over when you return. Continue to crate your dog for short periods from time to time when you're home so they don't associate crating with being left alone.

CRATING CAUTION

A crate is not a magical solution to common canine behavior. If not used correctly, a dog can feel trapped and frustrated.

- Never use the crate as a punishment. Your dog will come to fear it and refuse to enter.
- Don't leave your dog in the crate too long. A dog that's crated all day and night doesn't get enough exercise or human interaction and can become depressed or anxious. You may have to change your schedule, hire a pet sitter, or take your dog to a daycare facility to reduce the amount of time they spend in their crate each day.
- If you contain your dog in a crate, do not leave them for more than four hours. Most dogs are unable to control their bowels longer than four hours. Puppies under six months should only be left for a few hours or less. Their bladder control is not fully developed and they will tend to have more accidents.
- Crate your dog only until you can trust them not to destroy the house. After that, it should be a place they go voluntarily.

