

Crate Train me Please!!!!!!

Training Tips

Ideally, a dog gets to know her crate when she's very young. A puppy will acclimate to a crate much more quickly than will an older dog.

Training should begin slowly and be taken in small steps. Be patient as you train your dog to love her crate.

Do's and Don'ts:

- Do keep the crate in close proximity to you or others in your household, so your dog knows someone trusted is nearby.
- Don't put your dog in the crate and suddenly leave her.
- Don't let your dog out of the crate if she's barking or whining. Wait until she has stopped, or she'll learn that crying is her ticket out.
- Do make sure your dog gets plenty of exercise every day.
- Don't punish your dog if she barks, whines, or has an accident while in the crate; you want her to have only good associations with it.
- Do use the crate when your dog needs a "time-out" (a period for calming down when she's gotten nervous or riled) but only after she is comfortable and relaxed about being confined there.

Note: During housetraining, a rule of thumb is that you can leave a puppy in her crate one hour longer than her age in months. For example, a 3-month old puppy can wait about four hours. For an adult dog, the maximum time shouldn't exceed nine hours.

Step 1: The Introduction

Entice your dog to explore the crate on her own by dropping a trail of treats along the floor and into the crate. Never force her to enter. Hide treats in the crate throughout the day so she finds secret treasures when she goes inside. Put her favorite toys inside. Praise her lavishly any time she enters the crate on her own.

Move the crate to a spot where you spend a lot of time. Prop the door open, and make the interior comfortable by laying a blanket, a towel, or an old shirt of yours on the floor. Bring your dog over to the crate and act interested in it. Stick your head inside, and speak to her in a happy tone.

Step 2: The Crate as a Restaurant

Feed your dog regularly in her crate. This will increase her positive associations with it. If she's anxious, feed her near the crate, moving her bowl closer at every meal, until the food is at the back of it.

Once she'll go inside, teach her the "kennel" command by hand-feeding the first 10 kibbles of every meal in this way: Get her attention, then say, "Kennel," and toss each kibble (or treat, if necessary) into the crate so she goes after it. Then give the "come" command so she returns to you. Finally, give the rest of the meal inside the crate as a reward.

Once your dog regularly dines inside the crate, close the door while she's eating, and open it as soon as she finishes. After each meal leave the door closed just a bit longer than the last time, until she can easily stay in the crate for 10 minutes or more after eating.

Step 3: The Crate as a Hangout

Call your dog over to her crate with a treat, give the “kennel” command, and toss a treat inside. When she enters, close the door, and praise her. Hang out with her for five or 10 minutes, leave the room for a few minutes, and then return and wait another few minutes before letting her out.

Repeat this process several times a day, increasing both the time she's in the crate and the time you're out of sight. Once she can handle a 30-minute stint in the crate without anxiety, she's ready for an overnighter.

Note: Keep your room departures and arrivals low-key. When you leave, do it quietly and quickly. Have her be quiet for at least five seconds before releasing her from the crate. When you release her, don't act excited.

Step 4: The Crate as a Bedroom

At bedtime, place the crate next to your bed. Give your dog the “kennel” command. When she's inside, lock the door and praise her with “good quiet!”

A puppy or dog who's being housetrained may need to be let out in the middle of the night. If you hear whining, take her to her toilet area. If she only seems to want attention, don't give it to her. Put her back in the crate. If she continues to whine, say, “Quiet,” and then rap once on the side of the crate to startle her. Wait till she is silent for five seconds, and gently praise her with “good quiet.”

Note: Don't punish your dog if she has an accident in her crate. Instead, make sure you take her outside right before bed, and consider removing her dinner and water bowls earlier each evening.

What to Look for in a Crate

- A crate should be just large enough to allow your dog to stand, turn around, and lie down – but not so big she has room to eliminate at one end.
- If your dog is a puppy, purchase a crate that will fit her when she's fully grown. For now, partition the back off with a box.
- You can choose either a wire crate or a molded plastic “airline-approved” crate, which will also serve for air or car trips. Make sure the crate has a comfortable floor. Wire crates have the advantage of being collapsible, but the dog is more exposed, so you may want to cover a wire crate with a blanket to make it more den-like.
- Get comfortable bedding to keep inside, since the goal is to make the crate her favorite resting place.