



Crate Training Your New Dog

Crate training your new dog can provide many benefits. Not only does it aid in potty training, but it can provide them a safe place to rest when you are not around. It is best to begin this training right when you bring your new family member home. It is important to keep in mind that some dogs will make faster progress than others.

Here are the basics to remember when crate training your dog:

- **Crate:** Select a crate that is large enough for your dog to stand up and turn around in, but not so large that your dog may soil one area and sleep in another. If it is too small, however, your dog will be uncomfortable.
- **Bedding:** Use a soft bedding material in the crate, but remember to observe your dog in the beginning to ensure that he is not going to chew and/or consume it.
- **Location:** It is important to choose a location in your home that is not too busy or noisy, but where your dog can be near family members.
- **Duration:** Adult dogs should not be crated for longer than 4 to 6 hours, except at night while they are sleeping. Puppies under 12 weeks can only be confined for 1 to 3 hours without a bathroom break, and puppies that are 12 to 24 weeks should only be confined for 2 to 4 hours without a bathroom break.

Crate Training: Step One

- Toss a tasty treat into the back of the crate, leaving the door open, and praise your dog when he goes in for the treat. While he is in the crate, you can drop in a few more treats. A toy or a ball may also work for some dogs.
- Let your dog come and go out of the crate willingly, and as they leave the crate, use a “release” word, such as “free”, and then throw another treat into the crate. Repeat this 5 to 10 times during a session, and do around 10 sessions throughout the day.
- Once your dog goes into the crate willingly, start to teach a cue word for going in, like “crate,” “kennel” or “bed” as your dog goes into the crate, and throw a treat.
- After a couple of days of saying the cue word as your dog enters, start to use the word and wait for him to go in the crate. Once in the crate, drop him some treats.

Crate Training: Step Two

- Once your dog is willingly going in and out, try closing the door for 5 seconds while they are eating treats. Gradually increase their time in the crate. Before opening the door, ask your dog to sit while you open the door, and then give the release word as you let him out.
- Try to keep your dog in the crate for longer periods of time. You can provide them a stuffed Kong once they enter. Close the crate door and praise them. Work up to having him stay in the crate for 10 minutes by gradually increasing the time.

- Continue to create positive association with the crate by feeding your dog his meals and giving him chew toys in the crate. You can leave the door open the first few times, then try closing the door.

Leaving the House

- Have your dog go into the crate, giving him a stuffed Kong, or other high-value item, close the crate door, and then leave the house. Start by leaving him home alone for 10 minutes, and slowly work your way up to an hour, and then several hours.
- Put music or a TV on to drown out noises that may wake up your dog or make him feel anxious.
- Do not get over-excited to take your dog out of their crate or get nervous about putting your dog inside it. Make sure to keep your departures and arrivals low key, to prevent any anxiety that your dog could associate with the crate.

It is important not to rush the crate training process. If your dog runs out of the crate or is still going in reluctantly, slow down the process until he is comfortable. You want to avoid making the crate a scary place for your dog. He should feel like the crate is a safe place to go.

Some other helpful tips

- Do not let your dog out for barking or whining. If you think your dog may need to go out to the bathroom, wait for a quiet moment or have them sit first, and then open the crate door.
- Some dogs like their crate covered. You can try a light sheet or blanket over the crate. Just be sure to monitor that your dog is not pulling the item in and chewing or ingesting it.
- If your dog is chewing up the crate bedding, try material without stuffing, like a towel or blanket. He may have to sleep on the crate floor. If he pulls the cover into the crate, you may need to move the crate into a closet or a darker part of the home.
- If your dog is going to the bathroom inside their crate, you should revisit the situation. You may need to leave him for shorter periods of time, especially if he is a puppy.
- Crates are not recommended for dogs with signs of separation anxiety.
- Never use the crate as a punishment tool. Always make the crate a safe and positive place for him.