

Crate Training

Why should I crate-train my dog?

- To help with housetraining (dogs generally do not like to pee or poop where they sleep)
- To keep him safe when traveling in a car, or being transported in an airplane.
- To help gradually introduce a new puppy or dog to a household.
- To make sure your dog doesn't chew on dangerous or valuable things when unsupervised.

What size crate should I buy?

- For housetraining, the crate should only be big enough that the dog can stand up, turn around and lie down comfortably. If it's too big, a dog will be able to pee or poop at one end and sleep at the other.
- Once the dog is housetrained, you can use as big of a crate as you want! Some dogs who have had a previous bad experience in a crate may do better with an exercise-pen or a dog-proof room to keep them out of trouble when you're not watching them.

How do I teach my dog to love his crate?

- Sit down in front of the crate with your dog and some treats he really likes. Show him a treat and toss it just inside the crate.
- The dog should step toward the crate and get the treat. Repeat several times, each time tossing the treat a little further inside the crate. Let him run back out; don't shut the door just yet!
- Show the dog a treat and move as though you are tossing it inside the crate. When the dog looks in the crate, say "yes!" and toss the treat inside. After a few repetitions, wait for the dog to actually take a step toward the crate before tossing the treat inside.
- Soon your dog should be happily running in and out of the crate, and perhaps not wanting to leave it at all. At this point you can introduce a cue to tell the dog to go inside the crate, such as "go to your bed", "kennel up", etc. Say this just before your dog moves toward the crate.
- You can ask your dog to sit or lie down at this point, if your dog knows these words.
- Once the dog is happily running into the crate and staying there for 10 seconds, start closing the door. Give a treat through the door, then let the dog out immediately.
- Next, close the door and give two treats, waiting longer and longer before giving another one.
- Continue to increase the time the dog is inside the crate, with the door latched shut. If the dog stands up or scratches at the door, say "uh uh" and ask him to lie down again.
- One way to help a dog like his crate is to put a treat or favorite toy in the crate and lock the dog *out* of the crate for a minute or so until he's begging you to let him in.
- Once the dog is happy running into the crate and lying down, give him something nice to eat or chew while in the crate, such as a stuffed Kong, a Dentabone or Greenie, or a chew bone. (Skip this step if your dog guards these items.) These treats can be tied in the crate if the door needs to be left open.
- At this point, you can also have your dog sleep in his crate at night. If the crate is right beside your bed, your dog is less likely to fuss. You can also easily put your hand up to the cage for him to sniff to know you're right there.

What if my dog hates his crate or cries to get out?

- If your dog has had a previous bad experience with a crate, you may have to take things more slowly. With these dogs, it helps to do many short practice sessions and feed all meals in an open crate.
- Any time the dog is whining, barking, or scratching to get out of the crate, **always** ask him to sit or lie down before opening the door. The dog will learn that sitting or lying down is the best way to get you to open the door. Never let your dog out of the crate if it is barking or whining. Wait for him to be quiet before opening the door.
- Make sure you don't accidentally teach the dog to whine, bark, or scratch to get out. You must make sure that most of the time you let the dog out of the crate *before* he starts these behaviors. If he is always demanding to be released, you need to go back to the beginning of these instructions and gradually increase the amount of time he is happy to be in the crate.

Can a crate be misused?

- Yes. The crate should NOT be used to cage a dog simply because the dog is getting into trouble and requires attention.
- A dog should never be left in a crate for long periods of time. Young puppies should not be crated for more than an hour or two at a time, except at night.
- An adult dog should only be crated during an 8-hour workday if it has been given at least 30-60 minutes of aerobic exercise beforehand. This is even more of a concern if the dog is crated at night as well – these dogs will need aerobic exercise morning and evening until they have been potty and chew-trained. Most dogs will eventually be OK loose in the house.

Should crating ever be used as a means of punishing the dog?

- Some trainers feel it is OK to use the crate *occasionally* as a time-out place, but only if the dog also has many other enjoyable experiences in the crate.

