



## Crate Training

By nature, dogs are denning animals, and most dogs enjoy having a comfortable, private place to call their own. If they have been properly introduced and acclimated to an artificial “den” such as a crate, it can be their safe haven -- a place they can go to escape the hustle & bustle of a busy household or a crowd of house guests. Crate-training has many practical advantages; at some point, almost all dogs will have to spend time in a crate: at the vet, at the groomer, or to travel. In fact, car travel is safest when your dog is in a nylon crate. Crate training can make these sometimes stressful experiences more manageable for your dog and give you a little extra peace of mind. *Note: if your dog has been diagnosed with separation anxiety, do not crate them; they may harm themselves trying to escape. Contact our behaviorist for help.*

### General Training:

**Do’s and Don’ts:** **DO** randomly place hidden rewards inside the crate: a dab of peanut butter on the back wall or a few yummy treats under the bedding. **DO** praise your dog whenever you see them enter the crate on their own. **DO** choose the proper-sized crate. Your dog should be able to stand, turn around, and lie down comfortably. Some crates come with divider panels that can move as the dog grows; make use of these as needed. **DON’T** ever force your dog to enter the crate.

**Phase 1:** Temporarily secure the door of the crate so that it cannot close. Toss treats into the crate for your dog to find. Feed your dog one meal a day in the crate. Give your dog a safe chew toy in the crate. You want your dog to think the crate is a really enjoyable place. Do this during the day when you are home.

**Phase 2:** Toss a smelly treat into the crate, and say “Crate!” or whatever you want the cue to be. When the dog goes in after it, click and treat, or praise and treat, 3x, while the pup is in the crate. Then say “Okay!” and invite the dog to come out. (Do not treat them for coming out, only for going in.)

**Phase 3:** Use the same hand motion and cue word, but do not throw a treat. Click or praise/treat when the pup goes in. Close the door for 5 seconds, and click or praise-treat 3x while they are in there. Then say “Okay” and open the door. Gradually increase the amount of time the pup is in the crate, randomly click or praise-treating while they are in there. Move around the room, and gradually move farther away from the crate, and then, outside of the room. *If the dog whines or cries, do not react in any way. Set a rule that they must be quiet for five seconds before you let them out.*

**Phase 4:** When you are going to be gone for a while, give your dog something to do in the crate; a Kong stuffed with canned dog food and frozen is a great form of enrichment, and can be given in place of a meal.



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## **USING THE CRATE FOR HOUSETRAINING**

While house training, the three best places for your dog are in a crate, on a leash attached to you or in a closed room with you, or outside where it's appropriate to potty. If your dog has an accident inside their crate, clean the crate with an enzymatic cleaner like Nature's Miracle or Zero Odor and shorten the length of time between potty breaks. Keep them on a strict schedule of going out at regular times, to the same place in the yard. Ask for our housetraining handout if you need more information.

If you need to leave your dog for more than three or four hours, place the open crate in a long-term confinement area like an exercise pen or a laundry room that includes water and a potty place (newspapers or other absorbent materials.)

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