

Dog 101

How to Crate Train Your Dog

Crates are a great resource for dog owners. Here's how you can teach your dog to get used to his or her crate.



The benefits of crates

A crate is a terrific investment for a number of reasons. A crate can help with things like:

- **House training** - Prompts your dog to hold it when unsupervised
- **Chew training** - Stops your dog from chewing anything except legitimate chew toys
- **Settling** - Teaches your dog to settle down when alone and inactive
- **Kenneling** - Your dog may need to stay in a crate during travel or a vet visit

Getting your crate dog-ready

You'll need to give your dog a chance to get used to the crate instead of putting him in there and just hoping he adjusts. The crate should be a comfy, safe place where he loves to spend time.

Here are some of the essentials you're going to need for your crate:

- A crate large enough for your dog to stand up and turn around in (but no larger because otherwise he might be tempted to use one side as a bathroom and the other side as a bed)
- A fluffy crate pad or blanket to make the crate comfortable
- A frequently used area such as your living room or kitchen that can accommodate the crate
- Yummy treats, toys, and a KONG® for stuffing with meals and snacks

Once you have everything you need, you're ready to begin crate training.

Crate Training Phase 1:

The First Day

1. **Begin crate training the day you bring home your new dog.** At times when your dog isn't looking, drop a few treats into the crate. Don't point them out to him; let him discover the goodies on his own.
2. **Feed your dog his meal in the crate using a stuffed KONG®.** Use heavy string to tie it to the back of the crate so your dog has to eat it in there. Continue feeding your dog all his meals in the crate until he's fully crate-trained.

Crate Training Phase 2:

The Next Few Days

1. **Start teaching your dog to enter the crate on cue.** Say "into bed" or "into the crate," throw in a treat, and then give praise as your dog goes in and eats the treat. Repeat this many times.
2. **Switch the cue/treat order.** First say "into bed," then wait until he goes in before throwing in the treat. Don't give the command twice, and don't crack and throw the treat in. If he doesn't go in, end the training session.
3. **Try another session a little later.** Still withhold the reward until your dog goes in on his own. Hang in there; they all go in eventually. When he does, give him a double reward and do a few more reps. When your dog is happily going into the crate on cue, it's time for you to move on to Phase 3.

Crate Training Phase 3: *Closing the Door*

1. **Give your dog the cue to enter the crate.** This time, close the door and feed him treats through the grate for a minute or two before opening the door. Do this several times.
2. **Practice with the door closed.** Walk around the crate and around the room while your dog is locked inside. Occasionally, give him a treat. After a few minutes, open the door and let him out.
3. **Now add duration.** Stuff a KONG® with something extra special and put on a favorite movie. Set the crate up next to the couch. Tell your dog to go into the crate. When he does, give him the KONG®, close the crate door, and start the movie. Leave the room a few times, but come back within a minute or so. Ignore any noise or tantrums from your dog. At the end of the movie, if your dog is quiet and settled in the crate, open the door. Don't let your dog out when pawing the door or barking. When you do open the door, don't rush. Have him sit and then let him exit.
4. **Repeat with a treat.** Tell him several times a day to get in for a treat without closing the door.
5. **Spend a few days practicing.** Over the next few days, lock your dog in the crate while you're at home, going about your usual business. Ignore any noise and provide interesting chew toys each time. When your dog is going in without fuss and no longer whines or barks, you can start leaving the house.

Crate Training Phase 4: *Leaving the House*

This phase consists of two sessions:

1. In the first session, leave the house many times for 1-10 seconds at a time.
2. Over the next few sessions, gradually extend the time you're gone. Go from one minute to five minutes to 10, 15, 30 minutes, then one hour, then two, three, and four hours. Throw in short absences (5-60 seconds) to mix it up.

Phase 4 Do's & Don'ts:

DO: Leave without any fanfare. Return home without any fanfare.

DO: Tire your dog out with vigorous exercise and training before longer absences.

DON'T: Use the crate in your day-to-day-life until you have conditioned your dog to the crate slowly and thoroughly.

DON'T: Use the crate for punishment time-outs.

