



# Crate Training



In reality, crates can be wonderful and humane training and management tools. When using positive reinforcement methods, dogs can learn to love their crates and often choose to spend quiet time resting in them.

## Finding the Perfect Crate:

### 1. STYLE:

- Plastic crates often called airline crates, are easy to clean and lightweight. The downside is they don't offer much ventilation and can be flimsy.
- Metal wire crates are great! They store flat, offer plenty of airflow and strength but are heavier.
- We don't recommend fabric crates unless your dog is already crate trained and you are looking for a stylish and lightweight crate to switch them over to using.

### 2. SIZING

- If you are using the crate for potty training purposes, you want the crate to be large enough for the dog to sit, lay, and turn around in. To determine this, measure your dog from the tip of the nose to the base of their tail. Then from the floor to the top of their head while they are sitting. Add 2-4 inches to these measurements to determine the right sized crate.
- Once potty training is complete feel free to upgrade your dog to a more spacious abode.

### 3. COVERS

- Some dogs like their crate covered with a blanket or sheet, the visual barrier can promote rest and relaxation.
- Other dogs will find a blanket just another fun toy to pull through and chew up!
- Experiment while you're still at home to see what works for your dog.

## Crating as part of your Potty Training Plan:

- Most dogs will not potty in a small space, like a crate.
- Don't leave your puppy or dog in a crate for longer than they can reliably control their bladder. If your dog goes potty in the crate, it will hinder your future potty training efforts.
- If your dog is often pottying in the crate, set up a camera so you can see when they are pottying, which will help you assess why. You may need to shorten the length of time crated. Your dog could also be dealing with separation anxiety.

## Crating as a Management Tool:

For when you're away:

- To prevent escape: Most dogs who are left outside while their owners are away from home eventually escape the yard. A crate is often a safer alternative.
- To prevent destruction in your home: Dogs who have not learned what is appropriate to chew will often destroy household items when left alone.

For when you're at home, but it's unsafe for them to be free:

- To prevent them from running out the front door while you have it open to bring in groceries or greet guests.
- In multi-dog households or for dogs with resource guarding behavior. Crated dogs can't bully or be bullied while enjoying meals or high-value chews.

## Getting Started the Right Way:

For whatever reason you need to crate train, please make time in the crate a positive experience for the dog. The easiest way to do this is by using food!

1. A crate is a magical snack machine! Start by placing a few treats in the crate throughout the day. The dog will walk by and notice the pleasant surprise!
2. Crate training is fun! Repeat each of these steps a few times before moving on to the next:
  - a. Lure your dog into the crate by tossing a treat towards the back, let them exit on their own
  - b. Lure your dog into the crate, and continue feeding treats every 1-2 seconds - as long as the dog stays in the crate and let them exit
  - c. Hand signal your dog into the crate, close door, feed a treat, open door, let them exit  
Hand signal your dog into the crate, close

door, stay nearby and feed a treat every 5-10 seconds for one minute, let dog exit

- d. Hand signal your dog into the crate, close the door, walk around the room and feed a treat every 15-20 seconds for a few minutes, and let them exit
- e. Hand signal your dog into the crate, give your dog a high-value chew or stuffed Kong, close door, walk around your home, coming back to the dog to feed a treat every few minutes until they have finished the chew item, let them exit
- f. From here, you can slowly increase the length of time the dog stays in the crate, and decrease both the frequency of treats given and how often you appear back into the room.
- g. After they are very comfortable in the crate while you're home, you can start leaving them for short periods. Work up to longer and longer periods in the crate.
- h. While this may seem like many steps, most dogs can blow through this crate training plan in a single weekend! It's important to work at your particular dog's pace. If your dog is showing discomfort or anxiety during any steps, do more repetitions of the previous step.





3. The crate is an ideal place to rest! Keep a jar of treats close to the crate. Anytime you catch your dog laying in or even just checking out the crate, reward them with a treat!
4. Tasty things happen in the crate! Feed meals and high value chews inside of the crate.

## Confinement Anxiety and Separation Anxiety:

Some dogs find being alone very scary. For them, being in a small space can often intensify this feeling. If you worry your dog has separation or confinement anxiety, contact a positive reinforcement dog trainer for support.

### Balance is Key

While crate training can be a handy skill for dogs to have, spending too much time in a crate can be detrimental to a dog's mental and physical health. Just like humans, our dogs need ample time to play, socialize with us, do enrichment activities, and get exercise and opportunities to explore.



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