



Crate Training

A crate will save your sanity and your home from being destroyed. It also provides your dog with a safe place. Don't ever use the crate as punishment. When used correctly, your dog will view the crate as a bedroom rather than solitary confinement.

Why Use a Crate

A crate acts like your dog's den. He can feel at home in his special place. He won't want to mess up his area with accidents. It also prevents unwanted chewing. Dogs in a crate can't get into as much trouble.

Picking the Right Crate

Your dog should be able to stand up, turn around, and lie down comfortably. You want to avoid a crate that is too large where your dog might be able to urinate in a corner and then sleep in another corner.

For growing puppies, you can purchase crates with a divider that can allow you to increase the crate space as your pup grows.



Location, Location, Location

Location of the crate is very important for your dog. It should be in a quiet area of the house. Keep the door open so your dog can go in the crate whenever he wants. If he feels comfortable enough, he will want to sleep in the crate and go to it to feel safe.

Making the Crate a Happy Place

Make the crate one of the best places for your dog to go. Use a mat or blankets to make it warm and welcoming. Supply it with special toys and treats that are only given in the crate.

Use a treat-dispensing toy, such as Kong, to keep your dog busy when in the kennel. Don't use this toy for any other purpose so that your dog will look forward to going in the crate to get his special toy.



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Some dogs will take to a crate very easily. Others will require training to get used to it. When training your dog, start by tossing a treat into the crate and giving a command such as "kennel" as he enters. Offer another treat as you close the crate door.

Gradually leave him in the crate for longer amounts of time. If you need to leave for a longer time, provide a treat-dispensing toy to keep him occupied.

For puppies that are crying at night, you have to be strong and ignore the crying. This allows puppies to learn to self soothe themselves. It also prevents the puppy from training you to let him out every time he cries.

Anxious Dogs and the Crate

You need to train an anxious dog that the crate is a safe place. If forced into an enclosed space, the anxiety can worsen and the dog may hurt himself trying to get out. You will need to go slowly.

Start by feeding each meal in the kennel. Allow him to come and go into the kennel as he pleases without anxiety. As he learns that the crate is stress-free, close the door while he eats and then immediately open the door afterwards.

Gradually increase the time in the kennel while providing many treat dispensing toys that will keep your dog's mind busy. If the anxiety is too great, ask us about anxiety medications. You may also need to consult a behavior specialist.

Things to Avoid

- **Never use the crate as punishment.** Your dog will only learn to hate the crate.
- Don't leave your dog's collar on or toys that can be destroyed (such as stuffed animals) to prevent choking hazards.
- Don't place the crate in a busy place in your home. Your dog needs to have a safe quiet place for retreat.
- Don't let children crawl into the crate. Your dog may feel threatened or cornered.
- Don't place an anxious or panicking dog into the crate. This may only worsen the problem and result in self-injury.

Summary

Crates are a tremendous help when housetraining a dog. They can also save your house from destruction if you have a dog that likes to chew. Most dogs sleep all day when you are away so don't feel guilty that they are "stuck in a crate all day".

Exercise your dog before and after they are in the crate for long periods. If you are gone all day, have someone stop by to allow for a potty and exercise break.

Having your dog comfortable in a crate can bring peace of mind to everyone and safety for your dog.

