

Crate Training



Dog crates are wonderful and useful tools at home. You can use a dog crate for things like potty training, for creating the ultimate safe zone for your pet, and, when strapped down, for road trips with your canine companion. Dog crates or dog kennels also come in handy for emergencies, like when a natural disaster strikes. Teaching your dog to be comfortable in a dog crate is well worth the time and effort. Some pups are uncomfortable in dog kennels because of past experiences or have never had to settle quietly in a dog crate before. If your dog acts anxious or rambunctious in his dog crate, these dog training tips can help you teach him to be calm in his crate.

How to fit a dog into their crate dog: A dog should have room to stand up and turn around comfortably in a crate with the door closed. From front to back, it should be approximately one-and-a-half times a dog's length, not including the tail. the crate should be an area where your dog can relax, but not much else! We want to prevent the dog from eliminating on one side of the crate and coming back to the other side to lie down.



Never Force Your Dog Inside the Crate: Starting today, pledge to yourself—and your pup—that you will never push or pull him into or out of the dog crate. While you're at it, promise not to shut him in the dog crate before he is comfortable with it.



Hide Treats in the Dog Crate with the Door Shut: When your dog is not in his crate, sneak some treats inside and keep the door shut. Put dog treats, a favorite chew toy, or a stuffed food toy inside the dog crate, and then lock the door. Leave the door locked long enough for your dog to notice what's inside his crate. Then open the door for him. Use a frisbee or Diggs Groov with PB on it and attach it to the back of the crate. If your dog is hesitant to enter the crate: begin by tossing some treats close to the entrance of the crate and work up to tossing treats further and further to the back of the crate for your dog to retrieve. If they are comfortable approaching and readily entering the crate.

Start by Feeding Meals in an Open Crate: Moving mealtimes to the dog crate is a great way to get your pet to view the crate as a happy place. Start by feeding your dog his meals inside the crate, leaving the door open the entire time. Keeping the door open shows your dog that he's not going to get locked in. Being able to leave anytime makes the dog crate less scary for him. If your dog refuses to eat inside the dog crate, place the food as close to the dog crate as he will eat and gradually inch the food inside.

Crate Training



Briefly Shut the Door Partway: Once your dog is eating comfortably inside the dog crate, briefly shut the door partway in the middle of his meal. Also, add treats after you move the door. This is not a game of “gotcha.” Shut the door only as far as your dog can handle, which may not be all the way. If your dog seems nervous as you move the door, immediately open the door again. If your dog stays in the crate even after you move the door, drop in some dog treats. After a few seconds, open the door wide. Note: If your dog tries to get out while you’re shutting the door, or when it’s shut, let him. Next time, shut the door less or keep it closed for a shorter period. With practice, you can shut the door and keep it closed longer. The key is to work within your dog’s comfort level.

Extend How Long the Door Stays Closed: After your dog is comfortable eating in the crate when the door is shut briefly, you can begin increasing the amount of time you leave the dog crate door closed. Drop in treats while the door is shut. Open the door any time your dog tries to get out and make a mental note to make things easier next time. You also can switch from using a dog bowl to giving your pup a food-filled dog toy stuffed with a mixture of canned and dry dog food. It takes longer for dogs to finish meals in food toys, which translates into more time spent pleasantly in the crate. If your dog begins whining or expresses discomfort inside the crate, they have been in there for too long! Let them out and keep them in the crate for a shorter period next round.

Watch Your Dog’s Behavior Inside the Crate: Some dogs start whining as soon as the food toy runs out. If this happens, watch your pup and the clock carefully and leave him in there for only a moment or two after the food toy is empty. You can build up gradually, one second at a time, to longer periods in the crate after the food toy runs out.

Most dogs naturally are inclined to like small, enclosed spaces like dog crates, dog kennels, and doghouses. Some dogs need more help to learn to enjoy crates than others, though. Be sure to stay within your individual dog’s comfort zone as you work on this behavior. With patience (and treats!), your pup will learn to be happier and calmer in his dog crate.



As you go: Do not use the crate for more than 3-4 hours at a time, except for bedtime. If you need to break up the day while you are at work, try a dog walker or ask a friend or neighbor to come over and give your dog a walk. If you need to restrict your dog’s access to your home while they are still learning to love the crate, you can restrict their access by using ex-pens or baby gates, or by keeping them in a dog-proofed room while they are unsupervised at home.

Begin systematically crating and leaving: Move on to leaving your dog in the crate with something delicious, while you leave the house for short errands, such as getting the mail or watering the garden. Gradually build up the average duration of your absences while your dog remains in the crate. For example, crate them for 3 minutes the first time, 5 minutes the next time, then 2 minutes, then 6 minutes, back to 5 minutes the next time, then 10 minutes, then back to 6 minutes, etc. This way, you can begin to slowly increase the average time they are left in the crate but can keep the routine less predictable. When you plan to create your dog for longer than an hour, make sure all their needs are met (they’ve gone potty, they are exercised/likely ready for a nap) before you create them!