



# Crate Training

## Key Points of Crate Training

- Crates are designed to resemble dens that wild dogs would make. Your dog's natural instincts are to find a den to make their safe place. They see their dens as somewhere to be comfortable, find solitude, and sleep. Make their crate a happy place for them to be.
- Crates are an excellent potty training tool because dogs don't like to go potty in the same space they sleep in. This teaches them to hold it until their potty break outside.
- If you don't like the idea of keeping your dog in a crate, you can always phase out the crate after potty training is complete.
- Crates keep your puppy safe from getting into trouble or possibly damaging items around your home while you're away.
- Crates should **never** be used for punishment and you should **never** force your dog in their crate. This will create a bad association with the crate. If a dog starts to fear their crate, they won't want to go inside it and you may end up having to force them in every time. Instead use treats and their favorite toys to entice them to go in.
- Dogs can hold their urine and stool for the same amount of hours as they are months old. For example, a 5 month old dog can hold it for 5 hours.
- Limit their time in the crate. If your dog can only hold it for 5 hours then be sure that they are not spending more than 5 hours in the crate.
- Dogs are social creatures, they can become depressed and anxious if they are kept in a crate too long. Be sure to get the help of friends, family, or a dog walker to make sure your dog's needs are being met.
- During potty training the crate should be big enough for your dog to stand up, turn around, and lie back down. If they have enough room to go potty on one side and then sleep on the other, they will. After potty training you can make it bigger and more comfy for them. The crates that can expand as the puppy grows work fantastic for training.



## Step 1 - Introducing Your Dog to The Crate

- Place the crate in a common area of your home where you spend the most time, like a living room or kitchen.
- Allow the dog to investigate on their own. Don't rush the process, we want them to have positive feelings about their crate.
- Place some favorite treats and toys inside for them along with a soft blanket or towel.
- Give them the opportunity to go in and out by leaving the door open at first. Encourage them to enter the crate with praise. If they don't want to go all the way in at first, that's ok. This process can take a few hours or a few weeks. Let them go at their own pace.
- If it takes a while for them to warm up to their crate and you need to leave them somewhere safe while you're gone, you can set up baby gates to puppy proof an area if needed or use a small puppy proofed room.

## Step 2 - Getting Your Dog to Love Their Crate

- It's normal for your dog to be uncomfortable about being separated from you at first. We have to teach them that being in the crate is ok, that they are safe, and that nothing bad is going to happen. We do this by making their crate a wonderful place to be.
- Start this process by feeding their meals inside of their crate. This will build their positive association with the crate.
- Once they are comfortable going inside, gradually increase the time they're in there. Start with a minute or two. Build up to longer periods of time.
- Put the dog in their crate for small periods of time throughout the day when people are around. If the dog is only put in the crate when you leave they will start to think that the crate means my humans are leaving and I'm going to be all alone.
- Puppies need 15-20 hours of sleep a day so giving them a nice cozy place to nap is a great way to let them get used to their crate. You can leave the door open at times when you are home so they are free to come and go.



## Step 3 - Troubleshooting Crate Training

- It's normal for dogs to whine and bark in the beginning stages. But it's important for them to learn how to soothe themselves in this experience. Dogs can develop separation anxiety if they don't learn how to cope with being left alone.
  
- Although it may be hard, you will only encourage these behaviors if you give in and let them out. Once they learn that whiny and barking will get them out they will continue these behaviors. Give them some time to soothe themselves.
  
- However, if you are unsure if they are whining for attention or because they have to go out, always take them out to be safe. Once you become familiar with your dog's habits it'll become easier for you to tell if it's a call for attention or for a potty break.
  
- Talking to them or yelling at them to stop is still giving them your attention, even though it's negative attention, any form of attention will encourage your dog to continue.
  
- Consider moving the crate into your bedroom for bedtime. Your dog could benefit from the comfort of being near you. This will also make it easier for you to know if they need to go potty.
  
- When leaving the house don't prolong goodbyes, keep them short and sweet. This practice will encourage relaxed behavior for your departures and won't draw their focus to the fact that they are being left alone.
  
- For dogs with separation anxiety using a crate is likely not a good choice. If your dog is panicking in their crate and not able to soothe themselves then consider other options. Baby gated areas and exercise pens can be a good alternative to a crate. You can also consider a pet sitter or doggy day care.