

Crate Training Your Dog

Having a dog accustomed to a crate can be very helpful in many situations. It is one of the most effective management and prevention tools. Below are just a few of the reasons to crate train a dog:

House Training: Provides a close confinement that inhibits the dog from urinating or defecating. If the dog has accidents in the crate, remove any bedding. Ensure the crate is only big enough for the dog to stand, lie and turn around in.

Prevents Destructive Chewing: The dog is not given the opportunity to do this out of sight of the owner. You can give the dog appropriate chew toys in the crate.

Settling: Through proper training, it teaches the dog to lie and settle when alone.

Prepare for Travel: Accustoms dog to close confinement. Prevents added stress when traveling or situations where kenneling is required.

Safety: The dog will not be able to gain access to items that could be harmful or fatal.

You can create trauma for the dog if you don't introduce the crate properly. The steps to accustom your dog to the crate are:

- Put the crate in a high traffic area and keep the door open (maybe even remove the door to start).
- Occasionally toss treats into the back of the crate for the dog to find on their own.
- Feed the dog's meal inside the crate.
- Tie a high value toy to the back of the kennel so that the dog must lie inside to chew on it.
- After a few days, begin introducing a cue. Say a cue like 'kennel up' and toss treat inside. Praise as dog eats treat and then cue him out with another cue of your choice (do not reward the dog for coming out of crate and keep this low key).
- Repeat step 5 numerous times until the dog enjoys going into the crate for the treat.
- Start to cue the dog and encourage them to go in on their own. Once they are in, reward with a treat. Ensure you cue them to come out.
- If they are hesitant to go in on their own, wait it out. Do not repeat the cue!
- If the dog still will not go on their own, end the session without saying anything to the dog.
- Try again at a later time. If the dog does go in, jackpot reward them!

After the dog will go into the crate on cue, begin to shut the door when they go in. Treat repeatedly while they are in the closed crate to start. Only do small increments of time to start and then slowly increase.

Start to get up and walk around the crate and room while remaining in sight. Ensure you are returning to the dog and rewarding.

Begin increasing duration by keeping yourself busy while the dog is in the crate. Go back and reward as needed when the dog is being quiet. Ignore any crying or whining. Never let the dog out of the crate if they are crying. They need to learn they only come out when they are quiet.

Next, start going out of sight for short periods. Build this up the same as the above steps.

As the dog begins to use the crate more, ensure you are not just using it when you leave the dog home alone. They may begin to associate the crate with isolation and create a negative association.

Always teach your dog that the crate is a positive, safe place for them!

*Crate Training Your Dog is provided courtesy of the
Cochrane & Area Humane Society.*

