

The Dos and Don'ts of Crate Training

Why should I crate-train my dog?

- 🐾 To help with houstraining, as dogs generally do not like to potty where they sleep
- 🐾 To make a safe place for your dog while you're not actively watching him, a place where he can't destroy things in your home
- 🐾 To keep him safe when traveling
- 🐾 To help gradually introduce a new animal to the household

What size crate should I buy?

- 🐾 For houstraining, the crate should only be big enough that the dog can stand up, turn around and lie down comfortably. If it's too big, a dog will be able to pee or poop at one end and sleep at the other.
- 🐾 Once the dog is houstrained, you can use as big a crate as you want. Some dogs who have had a previous bad experience in a crate may do better with an x-pen or a dog-proof room to keep them safe when you're not watching them.

How do I teach my dog to love his crate?

- 🐾 Sit down in front of the crate with your dog and some treats he really likes. Show him a treat and toss it just inside the mouth of the crate.
- 🐾 The dog should step toward the crate and get the treat. Repeat several times, each time tossing the treat a little further inside the crate. Let him run back out... don't shut the door just yet!
- 🐾 Show the dog a treat and move as though you are tossing it inside the crate. When the dog looks in the crate, say "yes!" and toss the treat inside. After a few repetitions, wait for the dog to actually take a step toward the crate before tossing the treat inside.
- 🐾 Soon your dog should be happily running in and out of the crate, and perhaps not wanting to leave it at all. At this point you can introduce a cue to tell the dog to go inside the crate, such as "go to your bed", "kennel up", etc. Say this just prior to your dog moving toward the crate.
- 🐾 You can add a cue to sit or lie down at this point, if your dog knows these words.
- 🐾 Once the dog is happily running into the crate and staying there for 10 seconds, start closing the door. Give a treat through the door, then let the dog out immediately.
- 🐾 Next, close the door and give two treats, waiting gradually longer times before giving the second one.
- 🐾 Continue to increase the time the dog is inside the crate, with the door latched shut. If the dog stands up or scratches at the door, say "uh uh" and cue the dog to lie down again.
- 🐾 Once the dog is content running into the crate and lying down, give him something nice to eat or chew while in the crate, such as a stuffed Kong or Goodie Ship, a Dentabone or Greenie, or a chew bone. (Skip this step if the dog guards these items.)
- 🐾 Make sure that some of your repetitions with the crate door closed involve your leaving the room. You want him to be self-sufficient and content to spend time alone in his crate.
- 🐾 At this point, you can also have your dog sleep in his crate at night. If the crate is beside your bed, your dog may be less inclined to fuss. You can easily put your hand up to the cage for him to sniff to know you're right there. Besides, he'll be happiest sleeping in the same room with his human pack.



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What if my dog hates his crate or cries to get out?

- 🐾 If your dog has had a previous bad experience with a crate, you may have to take things more slowly. With these dogs, it helps to do many short practice sessions and feed all meals in an open crate.
- 🐾 Any time the dog is whining, barking, or scratching to be released from the crate, *always* cue the dog to sit or lie down before opening the door. The dog will learn that sitting or lying down is the best way to get you to open the door.
- 🐾 Vocal protest may also mean that you have increased the duration of his time in the crate by too large a jump. Let him out when he's quiet, let him take a bit of a break from the crate, and then step back a bit in the amount of time you're leaving him in there.
- 🐾 Make sure you don't inadvertently teach the dog to whine, bark, or scratch to be released. You must make sure that most of the time you release the dog from the crate *before* he engages in these behaviors. If you find that he is always demanding to be released, you need to go back to the beginning of these instructions and build up his comfort level again.

Can a crate be misused?

- 🐾 The crate should NOT be used to contain a dog simply because the dog is a nuisance and requires attention.
- 🐾 A dog should never be left in a crate for extended periods of time. Young puppies should not be crated for more than an hour or two at a time, except at night.
- 🐾 An adult dog should only be crated during an 8-hour workday if it has been given at least 30-60 minutes of aerobic exercise beforehand. This is even more of a concern if the dog is crated at night as well – these dogs will need aerobic exercise morning and evening until they have been potty and chew-trained. Most dogs will eventually be OK loose in the house.

Should crating ever be used as a means of punishing the dog?

- 🐾 Some trainers feel it is acceptable to use the crate *sparingly* as a time-out place, but only if the dog also has many additional experiences with the crate as a pleasant place to be.

Final tips

- 🐾 To make the crate an awesome place to be, make sure that all the best things in life happen in the crate: meals, snacks, the introduction of new toys to play with, chewies.
- 🐾 It's always best to start exercises with the crate after your dog has had some exercise, so that he's ready to settle down for a bit of a snack and a rest.
- 🐾 When your dog's not watching, slip little treats under the bedding that he'll find on his next visit. Before you know it, he'll be racing to his crate to see what new surprises await him!



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