

Crate Training: Your Dog's Den

Why Crate Train?

Crating can help house train a dog, or help an over-excited dog relax. It's a place where your dog can stay while you're away, where he/she can't get into any mischief. And, if introduced properly, it can be your dog's "den", their sanctuary, their happy place.

How to Introduce your Dog to the Crate

1. Keep the door to the crate open. Throw food, treats, and/or toys into the crate. Let the dog go in and out without closing the door. Feed all meals in your dog's crate. When the dog is voluntarily going into the crate, move on to step 2.
Tip for Success: secure the crate door in an open position so it does not swing and frighten the dog.
2. Put a stuffed Kong toy in the crate with him/her and shut the door of the crate for 5 minutes. Then open the door again and let the dog choose if he/she wants to stay in the crate or not.
Tip for Success: only let the dog out of the crate if he/she is quiet! If they are whining or barking, wait until they stop before opening the door to the crate.
3. Gradually increase the length of time that the crate door is closed. You can also start leaving the room. Start with a short time out of the room, and gradually increase the time you are out of the room. Make sure the dog is calm/content/entertained when in the crate. If they are enjoying their time in there, they will see the crate as a happy place. If they are not enjoying their time in there, go back a step or decrease the length of time they are left in the crate and gradually build up again.
Tip for Success: Never leave anything in the crate while you're not there that the dog could choke on!
4. Randomize the length of time you are away from the dog while they're in the crate. Also randomize leaving them in the crate with you present and with you out of the room. You want the crate to be a good experience for them, not an indicator that they're going to be left alone and bored. Also, crating the dog while you're home teaches the dog to entertain themselves and also provides "down time" for them to relax.
5. Continue leaving the crate door open when you're home and your dog is out – they may choose to enter the crate even when they don't have to because they enjoy it.
Tip for Success: Don't let anyone bother the dog while they're in the crate. The crate should be a place where they can relax and escape to if they need a break.
6. Once your dog is used to the crate, maintain the dog's positive association with the crate throughout their lifetime by dropping some treats into the crate every now and then.
Tip for Success: If the dog is going to be in the crate for a long period of time (4 or more hours), they should have a mid-day potty break.

Crate Tips

- For housetraining purposes, the crate should be big enough for the dog to stand up normally, turn around, and lay down. Any larger and they could use the bathroom on one end and lay down at the other end. Any smaller, and it will be cramped and uncomfortable for them. If the dog is already housetrained, you can get a larger crate if you wish. Some crates come with removable dividers to adjust the size of the crate.
- Put something soft, like a towel, blanket, bed or crate liner on the floor of the crate.
- You can drape a blanket or towel over top of the crate to make it more enclosed or cozy. Some dogs like this, other dogs do not. See what your dog likes.

If you have followed these steps and tips and your dog is exhibiting symptoms like excessive salivating and/or panting, biting at the crate, trying to escape the crate, using the bathroom in the crate, or constantly whining/howling/barking while in the crate, contact your vet or our behavior helpline.

APS Behavior Helpline

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