

## Crate Training

Crate training can be a lengthy process depending on a dog's comfort level with staying in a crate. Not all dogs like to be crated. Dogs with separation anxiety may become extremely anxious if left in a crate, in which case crating is not recommended. It would be best to contact a Certified Applied Animal Behaviorist (CAAB or ACAAB), a board certified veterinary behaviorist (DACVB), or a Certified Professional Dog Trainer (CPDT) to help resolve the dog's separation anxiety first.

With the exception of dogs with separation anxiety who cannot tolerate being crated, there are many benefits to crate training your dog. It can be used for: 1) housetraining your new puppy, or housetraining a newly adopted rescue dog if the dog's housetraining history is unknown, 2) preventing your dog from engaging in inappropriate behaviors such as destructive chewing or stealing from the garbage when he cannot be monitored, 3) traveling, such as in a car or airplane, or 4) boarding at the sitter's house. Adolescent and adult dogs should be amply exercised before spending extended periods of time in the crate (8 hours maximum). Ample exercise includes at least ½ hour to an hour of aerobic activity before being crated (in the morning before going to work and in the evening before going to bed). Puppies, aged 4-6 months old, should never be crated for over 3 hours at a time and 8-16 week olds should only be crated for an hour at a time during the day, except during the evening when everyone goes to bed.

Your dog should enjoy spending time in his crate, so preferably it should not be used as a means of punishment (with the exception of the occasional time-out). How quickly he becomes crate trained will depend upon his history with crating. If he already dislikes the crate, then it will take longer. Purchasing a different type of crate may speed up the training process (e.g. plastic airline or wire crates, mesh crates, or simply the bottom half of an airline crate to start for those dogs who are petrified of being fully enclosed).

If you have a dog who guards his food or toys, he may also begin to guard the area around his crate. Exercise caution while walking near the crate, especially if he's playing with a toy or eating a chew bone in the crate. If you need to remove him from the crate, entice him out by showing him the treat and then tossing it at least 5 feet away from his *guarded* territory.

### ***Instructions***

1. Sit down in front of the crate with your dog and some high-valued treats. Show him a treat and toss it inside the front of the crate. Wait for him to reach in and take the treat. Repeat several times, requiring that he step a little further inside the crate before giving him the treat. Let him to step back out at will.
2. Next, show him a treat and pretend to toss it inside the crate. When he looks in the crate, say "yes" and toss the treat in the crate. Repeat several times, and then wait for him to take a step toward the crate before saying "yes" and tossing the treat inside. Remember that with each repetition, your dog is allowed to come out of the crate. If he remains in the crate, entice him out by giving him another treat for exiting the crate. At this point the process should speed up.
3. He takes 2 steps toward the crate, say "yes" and toss a treat into the front of the crate.
4. He steps toward the crate, sticks his head in, say "yes" and toss a treat into the crate.
5. He steps toward the crate, places one paw into the crate, say "yes" and toss a treat into the crate.
6. He steps toward the crate, places one paw and then the other into the crate, say "yes" and toss a treat into the crate.
7. He steps toward the crate, places both paws in the crate and then takes another step further into the crate, say "yes" and toss a treat into the crate.

8. He steps toward and into the crate with both front paws and places one rear foot into the crate, say “yes” and toss a treat into the crate.
9. He steps toward the crate, steps inside the crate with all four paws, say “yes” and toss a treat into the crate. Ideally you want him to turn around and exit the crate. Give him a treat after he exits. If he doesn’t do so, entice him to exit by showing him the treat outside of the crate. If he backs out of the crate, try turning him around in the crate by luring him with a treat.
10. He steps inside the crate with all four paws, turns around, say “yes” and quickly reach inside to offer the treat.
11. Introduce a verbal cue to tell him to go inside the crate, such as “go in your crate” or even “go to your bed” if that’s where he sleeps at night. Say the cue just before he moves toward the crate. If he moves toward the crate before you deliver the cue just continue the procedure.
12. Cue him to “go to your bed,” he steps inside, turns around, and takes a step toward the exit, say “yes” and reach inside to deliver the treat.
13. Cue him to “go to your bed,” he steps inside, turns around, and then ask him to sit or lie down (these commands should be taught in advance of crate training). As soon as he sits or lies down, say “yes” and reach in to deliver the treat.
14. Cue him to “go to your bed,” he steps inside, turns around, ask him to sit or lie down, then cue him to stay, wait 1-2 seconds, say “yes” and deliver the treat. Again teach the “stay” cue in advance of crate training. Use a release cue such as “okay” to give him permission to leave the crate.
15. At this point it shouldn’t be necessary to cue him to sit or lie down. He should perform the commands automatically upon entering the crate. If he exits the crate before completing the full series of behaviors (sitting or lying down, and staying), withhold the treat and say “oh well.” Try again. If he fails a couple of times in a row, help him out by reaching in with a treat to lure him into a seated position. If he continues to fail, either go back to an earlier step in the training or stop the session and try again another day. Dogs, like people, aren’t always motivated to work!
16. When he’s able to remain in the crate for 10-20 seconds, touch the door only, say “yes,” deliver the treat, say “okay” and allow him to exit.
17. Little by little, over several days, move the door toward the closed position until it’s fully closed. Continue until he can stay in the crate 20-30 seconds with the door closed before latching it.
18. Slowly increase the time he’s in the crate with the door latched. If he stands up or scratches at the door, say “no no” and cue him to sit or lie down again. If he continues to try to get out, reach in and lure him back into position, cue him to stay, close the door briefly and then say “yes” and give him a treat. Say “okay” and open the door so he can exit.
19. Once he can remain in the crate for 60-120 minutes, give him something special such as a stuffed Kong® or other chew bone. If he guards his toys or chew bones, then only give him a single-serving chew so that he eats it within minutes. During this portion of the training it’s not necessary for you to sit next to the crate. You can sit farther away, perhaps read the newspaper, or stand up engage in an activity such as sweeping the floor or cooking. This way you can monitor for any signs of stress. The goal is for him to be relaxed with you moving about before you ever leave the room or house. Alternatively, if you must crate him while you’re home, knowing that he’s not completely relaxed, move the crate to a different room. *Never* release him from his crate if he is whining, barking, or scratching to get out. Ask him to sit or lie down first before opening the door. He will learn that sitting or lying down is the best way to get you to open the door (not whining!).