

Crate Training

Training your dog to go into and stay in a crate is a great tool for raising a dog. By training your dog to like a crate, you are opening up avenues to a healthier relationship with your dog. There are many benefits to crating your dog, and no negative effects. You will be able to trust your dog more and your dog will gain more trust in you. Crates provide safety and security for the dog, as well as a relaxing environment that is all their own. The crate acts as an artificial den when used in a home setting and will allow the dog to learn that the crate is a safe place no matter where it is located.

Benefits of crating your dog

- **Safety** - crates provide a safe environment for the dog. They have a space that is theirs. No one enters the crate when they are in there, and in most cases this goes for other dogs as well. The crate provides a physical barrier to the outside world and distractions.
 - ◆ A crate creates safety for other people and animals when the dog is reactive or anxious. Do you have kids in your home? Is there an activity (i.e. running the vacuum) that makes your dog anxious? Crating your dog for a short time while the activity/person that is causing the anxiousness will not only give your dog a safe place to be, but can circumvent anything bad from happening if your dog reacts. Simply, you are responsible for your dogs actions and will be held liable if your dog hurts someone.
 - ◆ A crate creates a safe place for the dog if someone comes over to your place that isn't normally there, a repair person, for example. There is both a safety component for your dog and for the repair person. Some companies will not service anything at your residence if the dog(s) are there and not crated.
 - ◆ A crate creates a safe place for the dog to stay while unattended by someone. Dogs will look for things to do while left alone, simply, they get bored. They are able to get into trouble when you aren't around and will do or get into something they are not supposed to. A crated environment allows the dog to relax and give you peace of mind that nothing will be wrong when you get back.

- **Veterinary stays/Medical issues** - When a dog goes to the vet and has to stay for any amount of time away from the owner, they are crated. If your dog needs a medical procedure, they will be crated for some amount of time while they heal. Even if your dog is just sick, being able to crate them will give them a place to rest and get better.
- **Travel** - Even if you drive instead of flying, having a crate at a hotel is a good idea. Some hotels require that if you leave your dog unattended in the room for any length of time, they must be crated
 - ◆ **Airline rides** - all airlines require dogs to ride in kennels if they are not service dogs.
 - ◆ **Car rides** - crates in vehicles for dogs are the safest place for dogs to ride.
- **Groomers** - Grooming places will crate dogs both before and after the grooming is performed.
- **Feeding** - some dogs need to be separated during feeding times for multiple reasons. Creating them for this reason creates calmness and less anxiety for both the owner and the dog.
- **Speeds up house training** - crating your dog speeds up house training. Dogs generally won't urinate or defecate where they are laying if being allowed to relieve themselves regularly.
- **Time outs** - a time out is when you direct your dog to the crate for a very short time to relax. Even though you are putting the dog in the crate for a time out, be positive about it. The crate needs to remain a safe place for your dog and needs to be relaxing. Give them a treat for going in their crate, and praise them.

The (Unsaid) Rules for Crating your Dog

There aren't rules per say for crating your dog, but there are definitely things that one shouldn't do.

- **Time in the crate** - a dog should not be in a crate for more than a few hours at a time. This goes for dogs of all ages. Once your dog becomes an adult and can demonstrate that they are able to hold their bladder for a long time, the length of time can be increased. A general rule of thumb is no more than 8 hours. There are circumstances where the hours will be longer, but try not to make long hours a habit. Think about how

long you could sit in an office cubicle before you need to get out and walk around or relieve yourself.

- **Do Not use the crate as a punishment** - locking a dog in a crate for an extended period of time is negative punishment in the form of mental abuse. Yelling at the dog and/or hitting the crate is also a form of abuse. Reaching into the crate to pull the dog out forcefully or hitting the dog in the crate are forms of physical abuse. When crates are used as a punishment tool, the safety aspect for the dog disappears, mentally as well as physically. The dog will no longer see the crate as a safe place, but rather a place that they should fear.
- **Crate doors should be left open in the house** - by leaving the door open to your crate all the time, you are inviting your dog to use the crate on its own. The only time the door should be closed is if you really need it to be. After the dog gets used to the crate, you might have to only close the door on rare occasions if you are home.

How to train your dog to go into a crate

Training your dog to go into the crate is fairly easy. If they are a puppy, put them in the crate and praise them. Give them a treat (low calorie is the best, one cheerio for example). Repeat. If you want a command for the dog to go into the crate, introduce the command and put the puppy in the crate. Praise them and give them a treat. Keep repeating until the puppy learns to go into the crate by themselves. Reinforce this often for the first few months.

If you are training an older dog, the method is the same. Place or toss a treat into the crate. When the dog goes into the crate, praise them. Repeat. Some dogs will only put their head in the crate at first. Keep trying until they are no longer hesitant and will enter the crate on their own. Leave the door open to the crate. You can randomly toss a treat or toy into the crate when the dog isn't paying attention. This surprise will reinforce the crate as a good thing.

Some dogs like the crate being covered. Experiment with your dog to see if they like the crate covered, covered only on one side, or only the top. Some dogs like to be hidden, while others like to see what is going on. This will vary by individual dog.

It will take time for the dog to get used to the crate, maybe a few months. Don't get discouraged or give in to whining.

Types of crates

There are a few types of crates and what you use will depend on your purpose.

Wire crate

- ★ Wire crates are often used for home use. These crates have one or two doors (depending on size and manufacturer), and a plastic tray that slides out on the bottom. The wire crates are foldable.



Travel crate

Plastic

- ★ Plastic crates are the most common crate used to travel with your pet. They come in a variety of sizes and colors.



Metal

- ★ Metal box like crates are made for traveling, though these could also be used in a house. Some are made specifically to fit certain models of vehicles.



Soft crates

- ★ Soft sided crates are made of cloth and a wire or plastic frame. They are collapsible and not meant to contain a dog that is not crate trained. These crates are great for traveling/camping/working with your dog.



Specialty crates

Specialty crates are designed to fit in aesthetically with decor. They are made of a variety of materials, are of different shapes and sizes.



Choosing the right size

Choosing the right size crate is important. You don't want the crate to be too small, but you don't want the crate to be too large either. Most crates will have a weight range with them and either sizes of dogs or breeds of dogs for the size crate on the box or tag. While normally going by the label will work great, knowing what to look for will help you meet the needs of the individual dog.

- **Height** - your dog should be able to sit up comfortably in the crate without touching the head or ears on the top of the crate.
- **Width** - your dog should be able to lay down comfortably in the crate without any toes sticking out of the crate anywhere. This width also allows your dog to turn around in the crate easily.

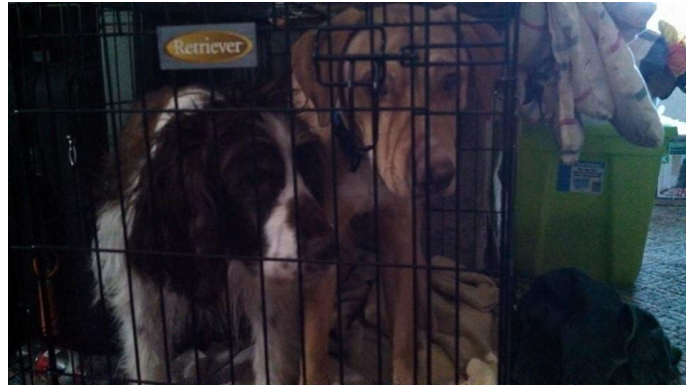
You do not want too much room in the crate, so buying the size large just because is not really a good idea. Dogs like to feel confined to a point. Remember, crates are artificial dens.

There are always exceptions. Travel crates are a good example of exceptions. They are often for the dog to just lay in, not leisurely hang out in (although this is an option if your dog likes this type of crate). Most accommodate the dog laying down with the head in an upright position.

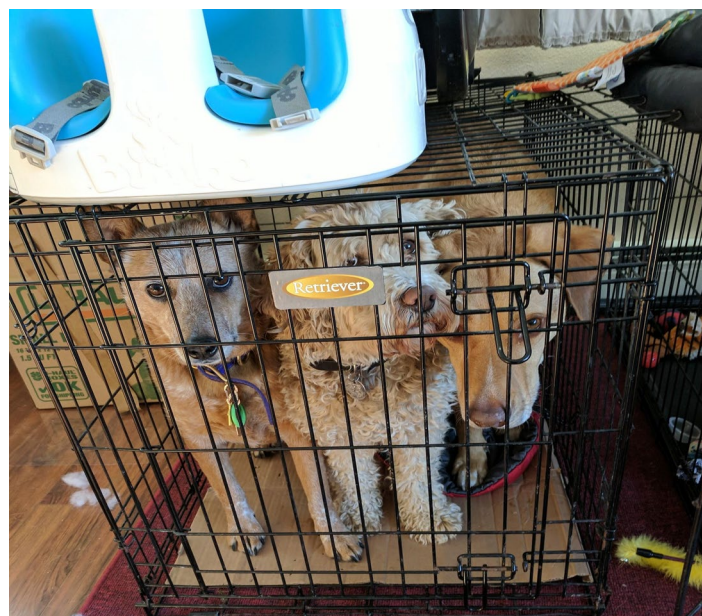
Safety for your dog in the crate

- **Bedding** - Not all dogs are good with pillows, blankets, toys, or anything in their crates. Pay attention to what your dog does with items in crates. If your dog doesn't destroy bedding in the crate, it is ok to put beds, towels, blankets, etc. into the crate for your dog. The less expensive rug bath mats are a good choice to start with as they have a rubber non-slip backing and are machine washable. Wash the bedding often to reduce odors in your house.
- **Collars/harnesses** - it is a good idea to take off loose collars, tags, and harnesses while your dog is in the crate. These items may get caught in the sides or bottom of the crate and cause choking issues. There are always exceptions to this, but pay attention to your dog if you leave these items on.

- **Toys** - some dogs get possessive about toys/chew bones in their crates. If your dog gets possessive, remove the item when your dog is not in the crate. Do not try to remove the item when the dog is in the crate, as this may cause your dog to react and bite.
- **Single Occupancy** - only one dog should ever be placed in a single crate at one time. Puppies are an exception while they are small.



Too many dogs in the crate!



If you make crate training fun and enjoyable, your dog will want to hang out in the crate without being told to. Crate training has great benefits and often leads to happier dogs. If you have questions, contact us. We'll be happy to work through them with you.