

CRATE TRAINING

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Crates can be very useful in multiple situations, especially when house-training a puppy. When used properly, the crate will teach the dog when to eliminate and not use the house as a toilet. It can also help teach the rules of the home and what is an appropriate chew toy and what is not. Crate training can help manage dogs with certain behavioral concerns. Finally, it is a highly effective way to keep your dog safe during travel. If your dog is fearful of visitors to the home, a crate is essential to giving them a “safe place” to be when people enter your home.

Training your dog to use a crate can take time, often up to a few weeks and should be addressed slowly and methodically so that your dog learns to love their crate. When choosing a crate, it should be large enough for the dog to stand up and turn around, nothing more. This process is not intended for dogs suffering from separation issues.

General Rules

1. ALWAYS give the dog something valuable when putting them in the crate (a treat or a special item such as a food dispensing toy or a long-lasting chew).
2. The best item to give a dog when they go in the crate is something that lasts longer than a few minutes and that the dog really enjoys.
3. Placement Matters: Keep the crate in a space where the family spends a lot of time – for example, the living room rather than the garage.
4. NEVER force the dog into the crate. If the dog does not willingly enter the crate, move to an easier ‘step’ in the training process. These are general recommendations. Different dogs will progress at different rates.
5. Do not make a ‘big deal’ when you let the dog out of the crate. The good stuff (praise, etc) should happen while the dog is IN the crate, not once they exit.
6. Do not let the dog out of the crate while they are barking or whining.
7. Practice as often as possible, ideally up to four times per day.
8. The crate should never be used to punish the dog or isolate them from the family during times of activity. You can place the dog in the crate while you are sleeping or in the shower, but not while the family is eating dinner together.

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Instructions

Week One

1. Make the crate comfortable and welcoming with a dog bed. Leave the cage door open, so the dog can freely enter and exit the crate.
2. Place the dog's meal in the kennel just far enough inside so the dog at least has to place their head in to eat.
3. Every time the dog walks past the crate, toss a tasty treat into it for the dog to enter and eat.
4. After three to four days, continue to toss a treat in, but once the dog is in the crate, close the door and then reopen it after five to ten seconds.

Week Two

1. Give the dog a valuable item (pressed rawhide, food dispensing toy or meal) in the crate (toss the item in to lure the dog into the crate). Close the crate door for 3-5 minutes.
2. After three to four days, begin to close the crate door for 8 to 10 minutes.

Week Three

1. Increase time in the crate to 15 to 20 minutes.
2. After three to four days, increase the time in the crate to 30 minutes.

If at any time your dog shows resistance to the crate or staying inside, step back to the previous set of instructions and practice until the dog is excitedly and eagerly completing the step.

We are always here to help! You can find additional behavior and training resources at pasadenahumane.org/behavior.

Adapted from Northeast Animal Shelter

