

Crate Training

Teaching your dog to love their crate is a vital life skill for your dog. Crate training isn't "mean" it actually has many benefits. Both for your dog and for you.



- They are less stressed out if they have to stay overnight at the vet
- They are easier to board. Your friends will be happy to watch your dog if they can crate them while they are visiting.
- It gives you a way to make sure they aren't sneaking off and developing destructive habits when you are not watching or are not home.
- If you have a visitor who is afraid of dogs you can easily crate your dog and still entertain your friend.
- If you have small children you can crate your dog to prevent the children from engaging in inappropriate behavior with the dog.
- It helps with housetraining.

You can crate train any dog. Puppies are easier and we will start there. First, when the puppy is sleepy it is easy to just slip them into the crate and soon they associate sleeping with their crate. If you have a puppy that is not so keen on the crate here is what you need to do.

- Make sure that you put the crate close to you so they can see you. The crate should mean confinement not isolation.
- Make sure you confine them when you are home. If you only crate them when you leave and you try to crate them when you are home they are liable to bark.
- Give them something to do in the crate. A stuffed kong that they have to lick is a GREAT choice. Licking is a self soothing behavior and if they are licking food out they are associating the crate with yummy food that calms them down. Most of the time puppies will then slip off to sleep after their kong.
- Give them a recreational chew if you are home to supervise. We don't want them choking on something. That is why the kong is a great choice provided they are not chewing off pieces of the kong.
- When they are in the crate and being quiet (but not asleep) drop in a treat or some of their dry dog food. Slowly increase the time between treats and the distance you are from them. Walk around and live life so they hear the sounds of life.
- Feed them their dinner in the crate (if you are not hand feeding) as this increases the value of the crate. I LOVE my crate because I LOVE my dinner.
- Do not put a puppy in a crate longer than their bladder will hold. A good rule of thumb for housetraining is 30 minutes for every month of age. So a 3 month old puppy can be in a crate for 1.5 hours between potty breaks. When they wake up and whine it's a sign they have to go potty.
- If you have to leave your puppy longer than their bladder can hold use a separate confinement area that it is ok to potty in. Watch this video to see how to create a puppy play pen area. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kn3aSPrndH4>

- If they are barking in the crate recognize it for what it is-a lack of training and go back a step. Have you left them in their too long? Do they have to potty? Are they bored? Is this too hard?
- When you let a puppy out of their crate IMMEDIATELY take them outside to potty.

If you have an older dog that you are working with the steps are the same except you can't slip them in when they are sleeping. And most of the time, with older dogs, they have developed the habit of barking and people give up because they don't want to listen to their dog bark so you will have to be extra patient and be prepared to spend some time working on this. With an older dog who is barking here are some additional tips.

- Do not yell at them to be quiet or talk to them. This is reinforcing the barking. Go back a step and start closer to the dog, stay there longer or reward more frequently.
- Be generous with your rewards for quiet behavior. You may have to reward every second for awhile. Then you will be able to reward every two seconds then every three seconds etc. When you have worked up to 30-45 seconds then you can start to randomize the timing. 5 seconds, 12 seconds, 2 seconds, 30 seconds etc so the dog never knows when it is coming and it isn't just getting harder and harder.
- For some dogs covering the crate with a blanket is helpful. When they are barking the blanket comes down and the visual stimulation is blocked. When they are quiet the blanket is lifted and their reward is getting to see you.
- Give them something to do-a kong is a great choice-so they aren't focused on being separated from you.
- If they are hurting themselves trying to get out you need professional help.

If you have an older dog who has anxiety or will go into the crate but doesn't like it if the door closes the steps are mostly the same.

- Toss a treat into the crate, let them go get it. If they come out of the crate, toss another single treat into the crate. Allow them to go in and out as often as needed.
- When they go in but STAY in and don't come right back out throw a HANDFULL of food/treats into the crate. This is a jackpot. They chose to stay in the crate.
- Continue to toss treats into the crate as long as the dog is staying in the crate. If the dog lays down in the crate another JACKPOT.
- Continue tossing treats and rewarding (with the door open) until the dog is really comfortable and you are rewarding maybe once every minute.
- Close the door-DO NOT LATCH IT-and drop rewards into the crate
- Open the door. If the dog comes out, fine. If the dog stays in-JACKPOT.
- Close the door do not latch it and reward
- Increase the time the door is closed-when you are at a minute and the dog is choosing to stay inside you and latch it
- When you latch it restart the timer and open the door at 10 seconds. Dog comes out, fine, dog stays in-JACKPOT.
- Every time you increase the challenge you will decrease the expectation. Meaning if he was up to a minute with the door latched and you go to move away reward him not at a minute but at 10 seconds. Work back up to a minute.
- Once you have the door latched you will work on the following steps
 - Dog is close to you and can see you
 - Dog is close and you get up and leave the room
 - You leave the room for a longer period of time

- You leave the room and make noise-cook, clean, jingle car keys, open door, etc
- You leave the house for a short time (2 minutes)
- You leave the house for 5 minutes
- You leave the house and start the car
- Leave the house, start the car and drive around the block
- Etc etc etc until you can leave the house for a run to the grocery store
- Then longer trip to lunch date
- Then longer trip to work etc
- If at any time your dog shows anxiety or fear at any level STOP and go back to the previous level and stay there a little longer. If you ignore this sign you will have a dog who won't go near his crate and you'll end up with a bigger problem. If you are in doubt set up a video camera and record his reactions and use that as your guide.

Some dogs are harder to crate train than others but that doesn't mean you should give up. Be patient with them and give them this vital life skill. Trust me, you will be happy that you did.



Namastay Training
Teaching People to Listen, One Dog at a Time

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