



Pawsitive Experience
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Crate Training

Teaching your dog to be comfortable in his crate can be of great value when housebreaking, when leaving your pup for a few hours, when they are wild and need a “time out,” or just when it is time to go to sleep.

How do I get my dog to love his crate?

It is very important to take it slowly. Teach him his crate brings all good things.

Leave the door open in the beginning and just toss treats in there. If your dog needs a little extra encouragement to go all the way in their crate, some trainers suggest putting peanut butter on the back of the crate. Another idea is to put a stuffed Kong and fun chew toys in there in and place them all the way in the back. Feed him in his crate so he gets used to being in there longer. All the while, leave the door open. Again, it is okay if he comes right back out. Some dogs will be reluctant to go in at all, and for those dogs, put the food and treats just outside the crate. When he goes in, start using a cue word. Many people use “go kennel” but any words will suffice. The best time to train this is when your puppy is tired.

When do I start closing the door? When he starts to go in voluntarily looking for yummys, start closing the door for just a few seconds. Make sure you open the door before he whines and asks to be let out. Work up to more and more seconds but when he gets fidgety and before he complains, let him out. Feeding him his dinner and working on a stuffed Kong is the best way to add duration so he is distracted and enjoys being in there with his food toy.

What do I do if he starts to whine and cry? Never let him out when he cries or else he will learn that works. We need to teach him that being quiet gets him out. Many dogs can go into a tantrum where they get hysterical and can’t calm down. We never want our dogs to get in that state. If he starts to cry, give it a few minutes to see if he calms down. If not, distract him with a noise like a clap of hands, a tap on the wall, or an empty soda can with coins, and the second he stops, let him out.

Many puppies can be crate trained in two days, but it can take a couple of weeks. Be persistent and consistent!

Below is a method from Trish King, the Director of Behavior and Training at the Marin Humane Society. Although most people use the methods described above, this is the method I used on my own dog, and my puppy was crate trained in two days.

Step One- Put your dog in the crate and sit right next to it. I put the crate right by the family room couch. It is best to do this when your dog is tired or in a very calm and quiet state.

Step Two- Every thirty seconds or so, whether your dog is whining, crying, or barking, drop a piece of high value food like chicken into the crate. After a few minutes of this (or less), the dog will stop complaining and begin to look expectantly for the next piece of yummy treat to drop.

Step Three-Keep feeding treats, but now lengthen the time between feedings. One minute, then two minutes and so on.

End the session at this point.

Next session should be later the same day. Move from 30 second intervals to 60 second intervals very quickly and then work up to 2-3 minutes between treats.

Then start getting up and moving around but keep returning to the crate at regular intervals to give a treat.

End the session at this point.

Next session begin by giving a treat upon entering the crate and one every 5 minutes or so. Lengthen the time he's in the crate and the time between treats. The treats always cease abruptly when the dog comes out. Chances are by the end of this session your dog is crate trained.

If you find your dog is too anxious in the crate, take it more slowly and use the first method above. Or start with the first method and when your dog is more comfortable going in and out of the crate, move to the method by Trish King.

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