

# Crate Training

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Crate training is an extremely valuable tool for you and your puppy. You will reap great rewards throughout his life by training your puppy to be comfortable in his crate. The crate will become his bedroom. It is a haven where he can get away from energetic children and company. It is a place where he can rest and be left alone. Crate training is the easiest way to control your puppy's environment, and it is helpful in housetraining.

Placing your puppy in his crate is not the same as leaving him in a laundry room or kitchen. Those areas are used and shared by the family, and your puppy needs and deserves his own space. Children should be told to leave the puppy alone when he is in his crate. More important, children should never be allowed to go into the puppy's crate.

Your puppy's age can be used as a general rule to determine how long the puppy can stay in his crate before needing to relieve himself. This information holds true while the puppy is awake or active. Using your **puppy's age in months and adding 1 will give you the number of hours he can be kept in the crate before needing to relieve himself**. For example, a two-month-old puppy should not be left in his crate for more than three hours, and a three-month old puppy should not be left in his crate for more than four hours. This rule holds until the puppy is about six months old, when the puppy can be left in his crate for six to eight hours before he will need to relieve himself. It is not appropriate for any dog to be left in a crate for more than 10 hours a day. Your puppy needs and deserves exercise time, playtime, socialization time, training time, and the opportunity to interact with his new family.

A crate is a training tool and should be used as such until the puppy understands all the rules in his new home. As he gets older, unsupervised time alone outside of his crate should be increased gradually. A very important thing to remember is to **NEVER LET YOUR PUPPY OUT OF THE CRATE WHEN HE IS BARKING OR CRYING**. If you do, YOU HAVE ALLOWED THE PUPPY TO TRAIN YOU! If the puppy has been in his crate for a while and starts to bark, he may need to go outside to relieve himself. Wait a few seconds until he stops barking or whining and then quickly open the door and take him to the designated elimination area. Immediately mark and reward him for eliminating in the proper location.

Begin crate training by setting up the crate in a room where the family is usually present. Place a dog bed or soft blanket inside the crate for the puppy. Leave the door open for a few hours and give him time to get comfortable with the look and smell of the crate. Once he appears to lose interest in the crate, throw a few tasty treats inside the entrance of the crate to lure him into it. Tie the crate door securely open to ensure the door does not close accidentally and frighten him in the process of learning to be comfortable with his new crate. If your puppy has not eaten the treats within 15 minutes or so, pick them up. At your next scheduled feeding, place your puppy's food bowl inside the entrance of the crate. Walk away from the crate and watch him. If your puppy is hungry, he should approach the crate to eat. If after 15 minutes he still refuses to go near it, take the food out of the crate and place it two or three inches outside of the crate door.

Again, wait about 15 minutes to see if he will eat the food. If he will not go near it, move the bowl a foot or so away from the crate and repeat the exercise. Keep doing this until you find a place where he is comfortable enough to eat. Once he is comfortable eating where the bowl or treats are placed, gradually move the bowl or treats closer to the crate and eventually into the crate and toward the back. *Always leave the door tied open* so the puppy can go in and out of the crate by himself during this phase.

Next, place a toy with treats inside it in the crate. This time when your puppy goes into the crate, close the door for just a few seconds. Then open the door and let your puppy out of the crate. Repeat this exercise a few times a day, gradually increasing the length of time you keep the puppy in the crate with the door closed. Once he is comfortable being in the crate with the door closed for about 30 minutes, let him out of the crate. **REMEMBER, TO NOT OPEN THE DOOR OF THE CRATE FOR YOUR PUPPY WHEN HE IS BARKING OR CRYING.** If you do, the puppy will learn that if he makes noise, he will be let out of the crate. This is not the lesson you want him to learn.

Most puppies love their crates. There are, however, some puppies that are very afraid of their crate and want nothing to do with it. Under these circumstances, it is better to find another method of confining a puppy than it is to force him into a crate. Other confining options may include a utility room, a bathroom, an exercise pen, or a baby gate in the doorway of a small room. For small-breed dogs, perhaps a baby's playpen would do.

Many dogs from shelters and pet stores have been confined to crates for extended periods of time. These puppies may associate a crate with a negative experience and are often very concerned about being placed in a crate again.

Crate training has many rewards, including being able to leave your puppy alone without any damage to your belongings or accidents on the floor from improper elimination. This will speed up the housetraining process and provide your puppy with his own secure and comfortable bedroom while managing his environment.

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*If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us*