

## Crate Training

*Being crate-trained simply means that the dog is accustomed to being locked inside a crate for a few hours here and there, and overnight - that he is relaxed and quiet about it and feels safe in the crate. ☺*

BE AWARE THAT A DOG SHOULD NOT BE CRATED FOR MORE THAN **4 HOURS PER DAY TOTAL**, PLUS 8-9 HOURS OVERNIGHT. We believe that is the maximum that is fair as part of a nice, enriched life.

### *Why does my dog need to be crated?*

Crating is recommended for MANY reasons:

- potty-training (see house-training handout)
- for safety when your dog is alone during the day or night (a young dog could chew electrical cords and be electrocuted, or get into something poisonous in your kitchen)
- avoids damage from chewing while you can't supervise
- helps with separation anxiety
- gives dogs a nesting area
- helpful for safely introducing dogs to each other
- if you ever need to put your dog into boarding or to a dog-sitter while you are on holiday, it will help prevent stress if they are already crate-trained.

### *How long do I have to use a crate?*

If crate training is done correctly, there isn't necessarily an end date for crate use, you will find that your dog loves the crate and the security it brings him. It simply becomes his bed. Do not be surprised if the dog wants to take a nap or chooses to relax inside his crate – it's a sign that he feels comfortable and safe in there.



## How do I start crate training?

### GET THE DOG USED TO THE CRATE

Get a crate that is big enough for your dog (if they are a puppy, you may want to account for their adult size). Place the crate in the same room as you are - usually the living room. You can have another crate in the bedroom if you want the dog to sleep in there at nighttime, but during the day the dog should be crated in the main living area of the house, where people normally are, so he can observe and hang out with you all while crated.

Leave the door open and let the dog sniff in and around the crate and get used to it. To begin, throw some treats in there so that they go in voluntarily (just let them go in and back out - don't close the door yet so they learn it is not a scary experience).

Feed the dog in the crate. Close the crate door and leave them in there for about 30 min after feeding (for young puppies leave them for only 5 min after feeding, they will need to go to the bathroom quickly). Feeding in the crate makes it a positive experience. Take them out to go to the bathroom as soon as you open the crate door, this ensures/reinforces house-training.

When introducing the crate, start with small increments during the daytime: put the dog in the crate for 10-20 minutes several times a day, then increase the time. Start by staying in the room with the dog (just read or watch tv – do not pay attention to the dog) but have them be in the crate. It needs to just be a normal, neutral experience. No big deal.

→ Correct any barking or whining, then go back to ignoring.

## What if my dog won't go into the crate?

Feeding them in the crate helps. Once you put the food down inside, they generally will head for the food (or a toss a few treats in there). If they don't go instantly after the food, give them a minute. If not, a gentle push on the behind should get them in, otherwise calmly lift your dog into the crate.

Do not give up! The dog must go in. BUT: don't get angry or start manhandling your dog, otherwise the dog will quickly learn that going into the crate is a struggle and it will only get worse and worse. Get the dog to go into the crate as calmly and gently as possible every single time, and before you know it, the dog will learn to go in voluntarily.

NEVER ever put a dog in a crate for "punishment" - the dog does not understand that human concept and will only learn to relate the crate as something negative. So whenever you crate the dog, do it calmly and gently and keep it a neutral\* experience.

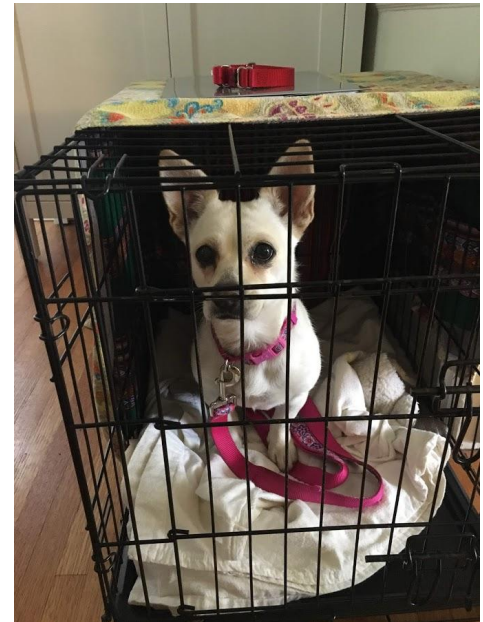
\* We ask people to keep it "neutral" (rather than "positive") because very often, people want to reward and praise the dog when he/she is inside crate. However, if the dog is anxious or stressed and you start praising them, you are only rewarding that state of mind and will make his stress/anxiety of the crate worse. Keep it neutral so that he learns for himself that the crate is nothing to worry about.

### What if my dog barks or cries in the crate?

It is quite common for a dog to protest the first time he or she is locked in the crate. Do not let them out, otherwise they learn that whining will get them out of the crate and they will whine forever.

If the dog cries or barks: verbally correct them – do not accept this behavior. When giving a verbal correction, do not look at or go to the dog (otherwise you are rewarding them with attention). A firm, loud “No!” should work. (If needed, reinforce your verbal correction with a loud noise, such as a clap of the hands or shaker-can. For stubborn dogs, a water-spray bottle also really hits home as a correction if the voice alone won’t).

With dogs who are stubborn or persistent barkers, it’s easy to lose your temper, but remember that this is temporary and getting mad will not help. Work through this calmly, patiently, but firmly. It can be challenging and frustrating, but focus on it as a training exercise and do not let your emotions get into it. Firm, consistent corrections allow your dog to see and trust you as a leader: getting angry will damage your relationship. If you keep working at it consistently and calmly, you will see results.



## NIGHT TIME

Training a dog to sleep in the crate at night is pretty easy - they may protest (barking/ whining) for a couple of hours but it usually only take 2-3 days for them to settle in and be quiet at night. Can be up to a week.

Have patience! Don't give in.

Ignore it, or yell “No” from your bedroom, if that works, and after a few days they will stop.

## LEAVING THE DOG ALONE / GOING OUT

- *The crate is the safest place for your dog to be while you are out of the house.*
- *We believe it's ok to crate a dog for a **maximum of 4 hours during the day.***

NOTE: You *don't* want the dog to associate the crate with being left alone, so while crate-training your dog, definitely also crate them for short periods during the day, with you staying at home.

When you leave the house, some dogs settle quickly, others will cry and bark for hours or try to destroy the crate. You have to keep practicing by leaving them alone for shorter periods initially (1-2hrs) and then increasing the time. **Prepare for this by getting the dog used to the crate as explained above.** If you stay calm about it, so will they. A routine can help (like, you always leave for work in the morning after walking and feeding them, so they get used to this being normal). All of this can take several weeks or months. Stay calm, and have patience, and don't give in!

If you come home and they are going nuts with excitement or barking in the crate, ignore them (we know it's hard!) and wait for them to calm down and relax a bit, then let them out when they are calm. If you consistently do this, it will encourage them to stay calm while you are away as well.

**When letting them out of the crate, do not talk to or praise the dog** - just open the door and walk away. Don't make too big a deal of it – be neutral. (If you give the dog loads of attention as soon as you let them out, they will see being let out as a reward to look forward to, and they will start to crave getting out of that crate in order to get that reward. You don't want a dog who is desperate to get out, because it defeats the point of him being happy and calm while crated.)

A bone or chew may help anxious dogs and give them something to focus on while in the crate – never give them that bone outside the crate, use it only to make being in the crate rewarding.

→ If your dog gets seriously anxious about being left alone, please refer to our "[Separation Anxiety](#)" supplemental handout for more info, or schedule a session with us.

### **Important Tip to Prevent Separation Anxiety**

If you are getting a new dog, you have the advantage of a fresh start, so start it right! The first day is when the dog figures out what the rules and routines of his new life are, so get the dog used to being alone in his new home right away. Crate them from day 1 and on that first day, make sure you leave the house for 30-60min, twice or even 3x if you can.

*This is incredibly important.* Wanting to spend as much time as possible with your new dog is understandable but, in the long term, it will not help your dog. If you hang out playing and cuddling all weekend and then crate them to go to work on Monday, your dog may panic at suddenly being left alone and may develop separation anxiety, which is much harder to undo once it is established. Do yourself and the dog a big favor and start practicing "alone time" from the beginning.