



## Crate Training Basics

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Crating your new dog is a useful tool for many situations. It may help a fearful dog feel safe, creating a den like place for them. It will limit access to the house until you are sure they understand what is appropriate to chew on and where they should eliminate. If you have a multiple pet household, having the ability to crate can provide safety to all when you are away or unable to supervise. Lastly, it can provide you a safe way to transport your dog in the car.

**Do not think of crating your new dog as a punishment.** It is about your dog having a safe place to relax while you are away, and a place they can go when they are uncomfortable or just need some time alone. If properly introduced and used for appropriate lengths of time, most dogs adjust quite nicely to crating.

**Choose the proper size crate, type of bedding and some safe items for your dog to have while crated.**

- Crate should be large enough for them to stand up, turn around and lie down in a comfortable position. IF your dog is reliably housetrained, you may choose to provide them a slightly larger space. (dogs will not usually eliminate where they sleep)
- Choose bedding you are not attached to in the beginning until you are sure they aren't going to chew it up. Old towels or blankets are perfect. Once they are trained you can splurge on the orthopedic bed!
- Choose toys or bones that are appropriate for them to have while unsupervised.

**Steps to introducing the crate:**

- Choose the place in the home where the crate will be kept. If the dog is initially fearful this place should be a low traffic area. If your dog is more social, choose an area where the family spends time.
- Begin by leaving the crate door open and letting your dog explore if they choose to. You can toss a few yummy treats in to encourage them to enter. **DO NOT CLOSE THE DOOR.** Let them come and go as they choose.
- Once they are entering the kennel on their own, feed all their meals in or at least NEAR the crate. Begin with the door open and work towards closing the door while they eat.
- During the day, begin tossing a few treats in the kennel and closing the door when they enter. Pairing a word or cue to this is helpful. "Kennel up" for example. Leave them for short periods of time. (10-15 minutes to start) Be sure your dog has recently gone to the bathroom and is properly exercised when starting. If they whine it is important not to let them out until they are quiet and calm, even if it's just for a few seconds.
- Increase the time that you leave your dog alone in the crate. For some dogs this goes rapidly, and they will be well on their way to being crate trained. Others it will require a bit of patience.
- Having your dog sleep in their crate is also a great way to encourage them to be able to relax inside their crate. If you plan to have your dog sleep in a crate at night, start this routine from the first night

if possible. It is going to be much more difficult to get them to sleep in the crate if you allowed them to sleep in your bed for the first few nights!

### **Trouble shooting:**

- Exercise! Be sure your dog is properly exercised before you expect them to spend an amount of time in the crate. Also ensure they have gone to the bathroom recently.
- If you are gone for long periods of time you may need to arrange for someone to let them out for a break at lunch time. This is very important if they are under 6 months old or elderly.
- Keep departures low key. The more worked up you are, the more they will think there is a reason to fret.
- Make sure your dog has something safe to occupy them.

**If you have followed these guidelines and your dog is attempting to bust out of the crate, is unable to settle, or appears significantly upset even when you come back, it is time to seek help from a professional.**

If, after trying these suggestions, you are still experiencing undesirable behaviors in your dog, SUBMIT QUESTIONS by clicking the link under Ask A Trainer on the Behavior and Training page of the Wayside Waifs website: [www.waysidewaifs.org](http://www.waysidewaifs.org).

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