CRATE TRAINING

Teaching your dog to be comfortable in a crate will have many benefits for both you and your dog. The crate can be a place of comfort and security for dogs, as well as a tool to help with potty training or prevention of destructive behaviors. The goal is to train your dog to LOVE their crate so they will enjoy being inside of it.

FIND THE PROPER CRATE

SIZE

A properly sized crate for your dog should allow them to stand up fully, lie down comfortably, and turn around on the spot. If the crate is too small it will be cramped and stressful. If the crate is too big the dog may designate a bathroom area in it, which can undermine potty training. They can also pace when bored instead of relaxing.

STYLE

Crates are often made of cloth, metal, or plastic. There are pros and cons for each style.

CLOTH	METAL	PLASTIC	HEAVY DUTY
Pros: Lightweight Easy to travel with	**Pros:** Foldable	**Pros:** Resembles a dark, cozy den	**Pros:** Escape proof Car safety
Cons: Easily destroyed	**Cons:** Anxious dogs may bend bars	**Cons:** Dog may chew the plastic holes.	**Cons:** Expensive Heavy

TRAINING EQUIPMENT & SUPPLIES

BITE SIZE TREATS	ENRICHMENT TOYS
	Kong toy stuffed with canned dog food or peanut butter (xylitol free)
Pet Botanics Training Rewards, Turkey hot dogs, or Natural Balance dog food rolls	Kong Genius Toys, Kong Wobbler, or Buster Cube stuffed with dog's kibble

COUNT CALORIES

If weight gain is a concern adjust your dog's meal intake to accommodate extra treats and food additives. Choose low fat / lean / reduced sodium treats and ingredients when you can.

CRATE TRAINING PROTOCOL

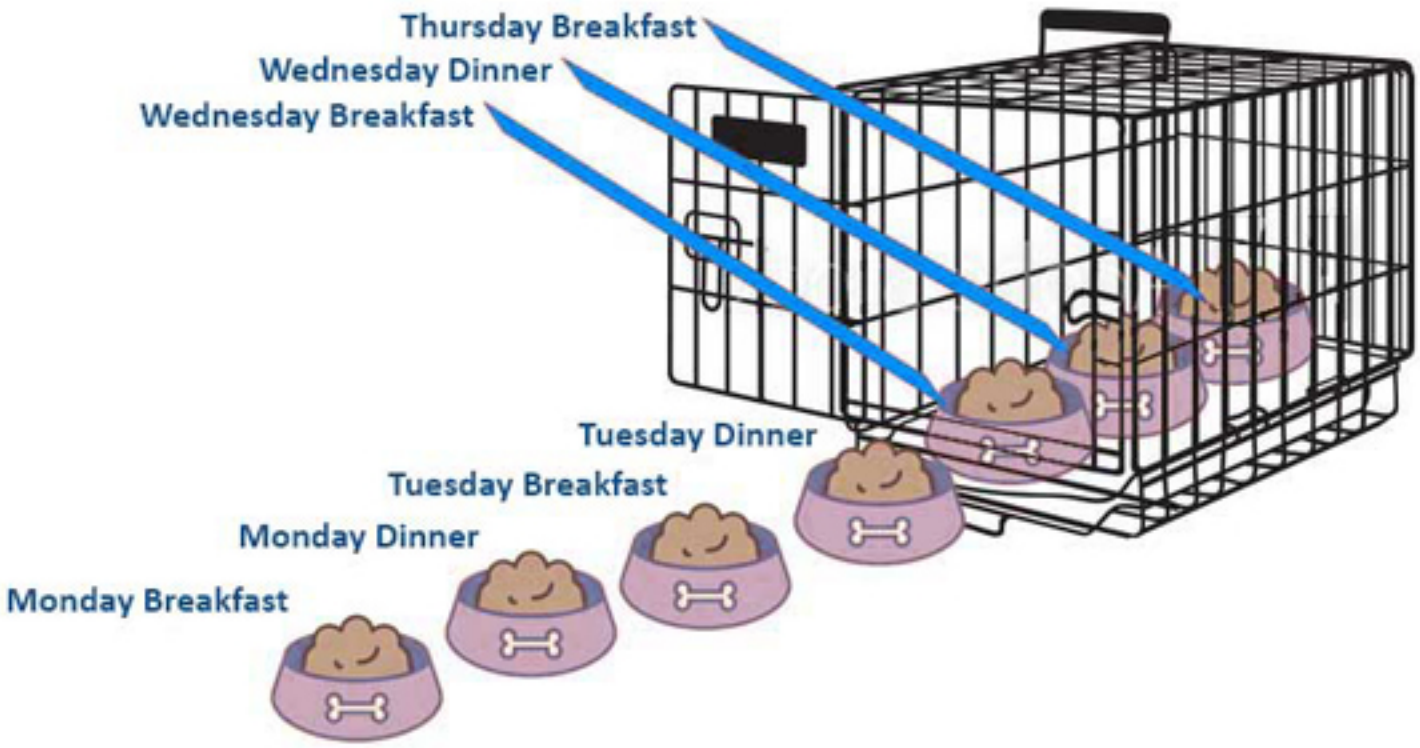
Below are two different training methods to crate train your dog. Both methods work best when used in combination, feeding meals in the crate and also dedicating training sessions to help your dog learn to LOVE their crate.

METHOD 1: FEEDING MEALS IN THE CRATE

1. **Begin by placing the dog's meal in a bowl as close to the crate as he will go.**
2. **During his next meal time, move the bowl slightly closer to the crate and feed.**
3. **Continue gradually moving the food bowl closer until you get the bowl to the front door of the crate.**

4. Once your dog will comfortably eat in front of the crate, put the food bowl inside the crate right at the front entrance.
5. Gradually move the bowl toward the back of the crate.
6. When your dog will gladly enter his whole body into the crate proceed to the next method.

The graphic below demonstrates a training schedule recommendation. If your dog becomes uncomfortable with the training pace, slow the pace down!



METHOD 2: TREAT LURES & ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES

Keep these training sessions around 5 minutes long until you've reached Step 8. For best results practice a minimum of 3 times a day! The training process has been broken down into several steps but they have not been tailored to your individual dog. All dogs will progress differently so be mindful of your dog's responses to the exercises and keep their happiness and safety a top priority! Sometimes multiple steps and/or time intervals can be completed in a single day or it could take a few days to complete a single step. Don't get discouraged!

METHOD 2:

1. Toss a few bite size treats at the front of the crate and leave the crate door open. Let your dog enter the crate to eat the treats and leave freely. When your dog is happy to approach the front of the crate proceed to the next step.

If your dog won't approach the front of the crate, create a treat trail up to the crate to help your dog feel more confident. Method 1 training will also help your dog approach the crate.

2. Toss a few bite size treats at the back of the crate and leave the crate door open. Let your dog enter the crate to eat the treats and leave freely.

3. Put a treat in your left hand, point to the crate with your left hand, and then toss that treat into the crate. Your dog should enter the crate to get the treat. Practice this multiple times before starting the next step. We are teaching your dog a hand signal.

4. Without a treat in your pointing hand, point at the crate. If your dog enters the crate without being prompted with a treat – praise him and give him a treat from your non-pointing hand. Practice this multiple times before starting the next step.

If your dog didn't enter the crate when you pointed without a treat, return to step 3 until your dog has enough experience to succeed during step 4.

5. Stand next to the crate, say "crate" and then point at the crate with your pointing hand. When the dog enters, praise him and give treats from the non-pointing hand. Practice this multiple times before starting the next step. We are teaching your dog a verbal cue.

6. Stand next to the crate, say "crate" but don't point this time. We are teaching the dog to follow a verbal cue only. When the dog enters the crate, praise him and reward with a treat from your non-pointing hand.

METHOD 2:

If your dog didn't enter the crate when you said "crate", try saying "crate" and then waiting an extra second before pointing to the crate. Ideally you want to see the dog start to go into the crate as soon as he hears the verbal cue and not only when he sees the hand signal.

7. Say "crate". When the dog enters the crate, shut the crate door for 1 second, and then toss a treat into the crate. When the dog finishes eating the treat, toss in another treat, open the door, and allow the dog to exit.

Practice this step by gradually increasing the time the door is shut. Try these time intervals: 5 seconds, 10 seconds, 15 seconds, 30 seconds, 1 minute, and 3 minutes. If your dog becomes stressed, decrease the time interval.

8. Say "crate". When the dog enters the crate, shut the crate door, and then toss a treat into the crate.

Take a few steps away from the crate and then return and toss in another treat. Repeat this until the training session is over.

Practice this step by gradually increasing the amount of steps you take away from the crate. Try these step intervals: 5 steps, 10 steps, 15 steps, and eventually working your way to leaving the room. If your dog becomes stressed, slow down the training by decreasing the amount of steps taken away.

Start this step with training sessions at 5 minutes and work your way to 15minutes.

9. Say “crate”. When the dog enters the crate, give him an unfrozen wet food filled enrichment toy such as a Kong and shut the crate door until he is finished with the toy or when he decides he’s ready to leave the crate. Toss a treat into the crate. Open the door, and allow the dog to exit.

This step should be done with direct supervision so your eyes are on your dog as soon as he finishes his toy or when he is ready to leave.

Initially start this step by standing or sitting next to the crate, but with each practice session start to take a few steps away from the crate. Stay in the direct line of sight but be at a distance so your dog will succeed in the next step.

10. Say “crate”. When the dog enters the crate, give him a frozen wet food filled enrichment toy such as a Kong and shut the crate door. Walk away from your dog’s crate and leave the room.

Initially start this step by leaving the room for a short period of time. Try the following time intervals: 1 second, 5 seconds, 10 seconds, 30 seconds, 1 minute, 3 minutes, 5 minutes. Once you choose a time interval, repeatedly leave the room and return to the room for up to 15 minutes. Keep the absence sessions short at first and work your way up to 15minutes with practice. When the session is over, toss a treat into the crate. Open the door, and allow the dog to exit.

If your dog doesn’t even notice you are gone, try a longer time interval of absence. You can do these absence exercises by leaving the room for the time interval and then returning to the room and hanging out a few seconds before leaving again.

If your dog stops interacting with his enrichment toy when you leave, keep the absence intervals very short until he is confident enough for longer intervals.

If your dog finishes his enrichment toy and then becomes stressed, revisit step 8 and work your way up to an increased training session time. So instead of moving to step 9 when you’ve achieved a comfortable 15minute training session when practicing step 8, instead increase the training session time to 20 or 30 minutes before progressing on.

A STEP 10, 5 SECOND INTERVAL SESSION WOULD LOOK LIKE THIS:

- Say "crate".
- When dog enters crate, give him a frozen wet food enrichment toy.
- Shut the crate door.
- Leave the room for 5 seconds.
- Return to the room and be in the direct line of sight of your dog for a few seconds.
- Leave the room for 5 seconds.
- Return to the room and be in the direct line of sight of your dog for a few seconds.
- Continue leaving and returning until your dog has finished the enrichment toy.
- Toss a treat into the crate.
- Open the door and allow your dog to exit.

Continue practicing step 10 until you can leave the room for 15-30 minutes with no issues. As your dog's crate time duration increases he may finish his enrichment toy before time is up. That's ok. If your dog looks content and relaxed there is no need to restock a new toy. If your dog looks upset, the time interval may be too high.

11. Say "crate". When the dog enters the crate, give him a frozen wet food filled enrichment toy such as a Kong and shut the crate door. Walk away from your dog's crate and leave the room. Pick up your car keys and walk out the front door. Walk back inside. Toss a treat into the crate. Open the door, and allow the dog to exit. This step prepares your dog for a real departure.

Once you've reached this step, also begin feeding your dog's meals in enrichment toys such as the Kong Genius Toys, Kong Wobbler, or Buster Cube while in the crate with the door closed.

12. Say "crate". When the dog enters the crate, give him a frozen wet food filled enrichment toy such as a Kong and shut the crate door. Walk away from your dog's crate and leave the room. Run a small errand for 15-30minutes and return home. Toss a treat into the crate. Open the door, and allow the dog to exit.

Continue practicing Step 12 indefinitely and increase the duration of your errand time.

Remember that dogs typically don't like to soil their crates so be mindful of your dog's potty schedule so they aren't holding their waste all day.

THE DON'TS OF CRATE TRAINING

DON'T

USE THE CRATE AS A PUNISHMENT.

If you want your dog to LOVE their crate, it should only be viewed as a happy place. You can calmly escort your dog to the crate as needed but do not threaten to crate the dog if he is misbehaving.

DON'T

RUSH THE TRAINING.

In order to set your dog up for success, be sure to go at your dog's pace. Rushing the training can result in an anxious dog. Anxious dogs may start trying to escape their crate. Crate escapes can injure the dog and/or break the crate.

DON'T

PUT THE DOG IN AN INCORRECTLY SIZED CRATE.

A crate that is too small creates stress in the mind and body of the dog. A crate that is too large may encourage crate soiling and pacing.

DON'T

LEAVE THE DOG IN LONGER THAN THEY CAN HANDLE.

If your dog is left in the crate too long, this can create physical and mental issues. Stress from lack of movement, poor mental stimulation, and from holding in waste for extended periods of time is detrimental to the dog.

DON'T

STARTLE OR SCARE THE DOG IN THE CRATE.

The crate should be a happy and relaxing place for your dog. Startling or scaring the dog while in the crate will create negative associations with the crate itself which will set back training.