

Crate Training

What is it?

The crate is an indoor dog house – large enough for a dog to stand up, lie down, and turn around in – made of plastic, wire fabric or heavy duty aluminum.

What is it for?

It is a containment system that you can use to manage your dog in a variety of situations and environments.

How do you use it?

A crate should be placed in a commonly used area of the household, such as a living room or kitchen. For young puppies, the crate can be placed in a bedroom to help with overnight house training issues. For people involved in dog sports, a crate is a tool to contain the dog in busy venues. The crate can also be used as a “home away from home” for dogs who travel with their people.

The crate should be used as a management tool and a safe place for your dog to be away from the fuss of a busy environment. It should *not* be used as punishment.

Training: There are several methods for teaching your dog to love the crate.

Crates mean treats: Leave the crate door wide open and make sure your dog has access to the room where you’ve set up the crate. Every so often, when he’s not looking, toss a few treats around and into the crate so he can discover them on his own. Use something that your dog will love, like small pieces of chicken, cheese, hot dog or freeze-dried liver. You can also leave an exciting new toy, a delicious chew bone or a stuffed KONG® toy inside the crate. Periodically leave special treats in your dog’s crate throughout the evening, and continue to do so every day or so for the next few weeks. If your dog sometimes finds surprise goodies in his crate, he’ll start to love it, and he’ll probably go into it often just to see if the “Treat Fairy” has come. Another trick is to rub peanut butter or cream cheese on the back panel of the crate.

Room Service: You can start off by feeding your dog in his crate with the door open. If he’s afraid of that, place the food dish outside the crate and move it slowly inside the crate over a period of several meals. Once your dog is comfortable with the idea of being in the crate while eating, close the door briefly. When he’s finished with the meal, open the door to let your dog out.

Send to the crate:

Step One: Follow the Treat

You can do the following exercises sitting on the floor or in a chair right next to the crate. Initiate Step One early in the day.

1. Give a cue to ask your dog to go into the crate, such as “kennel.”
2. Show your dog one of the treats and toss it in the crate. After he goes inside to eat it, praise him enthusiastically and feed him another treat while he’s still inside.
3. Release your dog from the crate with another cue like “Release” or “Let’s go.” For right now, don’t reward your dog for coming out of the crate; he needs to learn all good things happen while he’s *inside* the crate.
4. Repeat the steps above 10 times.
5. Take a short break (just a few minutes), and then do another set of 10 repetitions. After your second set, end the training session.

Step Two: Earn the Treat

Later on in the morning, collect some treats and bring your dog to the crate for more training. Now that he’s practiced following a treat into the crate in Step One, you’ll be asking him to go in *before* rewarding with the treat.

To warm up, do a couple repetitions just like you did before in Step One – throwing the treat into the crate so that your dog follows it. Then you can change the rules a little.

1. Give your cue, “kennel,” and point to the crate instead of throwing a treat into it. (When you point, it might help to move your arm like you did when tossing a treat into the crate. The familiar motion can remind your dog what he’s supposed to do.)
2. When your dog goes in, praise and immediately give a couple of treats while he’s still in the crate. Release your dog from the crate.
3. Repeat the steps above 10 times.

Step Three: Close the crate door

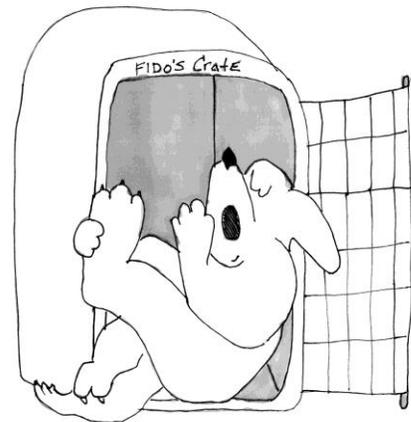
To warm up, do a couple repetitions just like you did before in Step Two. Say “kennel,” point to the crate, reward your dog with a treat when he goes in and then cue him to come out.

Now you’ll try closing the crate door for just a moment.

1. Give your cue “kennel” and point to the crate.
2. When your dog goes in the crate, praise him and immediately give a treat.
3. Then gently close the crate door. (You don’t have to latch it yet.)
4. Feed your dog two or three treats through the closed crate door and continue to praise him while he’s in the crate.
5. Say “release” and open the crate door to let your dog out. (If your dog seems stressed or panicked with the door briefly closed, break down this exercise into two phases: in the first phase, just close the door halfway, give a treat and release your dog; in the second phase, close the door all the way.)
6. Repeat steps above 10 times if the dog is enjoying the game.

Step Four: Add duration

1. After your dog is in the crate with the door closed, sit right next to the crate.
2. Drop treats into the crate every 30 seconds or so.
3. Then, begin lengthening the time between treats, working up to one minute and then to two minutes.
4. For the next session, move from 30 seconds to 60 seconds quickly.
5. Get up and depart from the crate in different directions returning at regular intervals to reward in the crate.



Troubleshooting:

My dog whines and barks in the crate:

- It's crucial to break down the length of time in a crate to avoid such displays.
- Yelling at your dog to be quiet is not appropriate.
- Ignore the whining and reward the quiet.
- A young puppy might not be able to sleep through the night without having to eliminate. If your puppy whines in the middle of the night, take him to his elimination spot.

My dog panics and tears at the crate sides:

- Not all dogs are appropriate for crate training.
- For dogs with severe separation anxiety, crating is not an appropriate tool.
- Talk with one of our Behavior & Training Consultants for assistance with issues like separation and destruction.

My dog won't go in the crate:

- Dogs who seem very nervous about going into crates might need preliminary training with crate-like objects.
- If your dog seems reluctant to step into a crate, you can try teaching him to walk under a suspended tarp or blanket, step between two upright boards or lie down in the bottom half of an airline crate (with the top removed) before trying to coax him into an enclosed crate.
- When you start training with an airline or wire crate, it might make your dog more comfortable to remove the door or simply leave it ajar. If you have a mesh crate, flip the door up over the roof to keep it open.

How long can I crate my dog?

At night when dogs sleep, their body systems and elimination slow down. This explains why they can go all night without eliminating once they're old enough to have sufficient bladder and bowel control. But during the day, neither puppies nor adult dogs should be crated for more than four hours at a time.

<u>Age of dog</u>	<u>Maximum time in crate</u>
8–10 weeks	30–60 minutes
11–14 weeks	1–3 hours
15–16 weeks	3–4 hours
17+ weeks	4 hours

Types of Crates:

Crates are available in many styles and are made out of a variety of materials. If you plan to use the crate to transport your dog on a plane, make sure it is “Airline Compliant.”

Plastic crates: Plastic crates are made of high-impact sturdy plastic and have a swinging, metal ribbed door that has some style of rotary door lock. There are vent holes cut in the plastic on the sides and back. These crates are made in various sizes and range in price from about \$30-\$150. They are available online and in most pet stores.

Fabric crates: Fabric crates are made of heavy duty, washable material – canvas or nylon. They should have a sturdy steel frame. Most have mesh sides and back, with fold-down “privacy” flaps. Prices range from \$80 for the small to \$140 for the X-large. Dogs should be comfortably crate trained in one of the more durable crates before using this type of crate.

Wire crates: Wire crates are made out of 6 gauge wire or lighter 8 gauge wire. All have an open mesh all around. The larger wire crates can be 48” x 30,” while the larger plastic crates are 42” x 28.” They range in price from \$30 to \$175 depending on the strength and size of the crate. Covering the crate can help with barking or allowing your dog to truly relax. You can buy a correctly sized cover or use a light sheet. If you use a sheet, monitor your dog to ensure that he doesn’t chew up the sheet.

Heavy-duty aluminum crates: These high-end crates are appropriate if you do a lot of airline traveling with your dog and want to know he is secure and safe. They come with stainless steel hardware, locking slam latch that is keyed and a barred door. They are expensive: \$400 and up. These crates are also appropriate for dogs that will destroy other types of crates. Website: zingerwinger.com

Safety Concerns:

Crates should not be used as a replacement for exercise, training and mental stimulation. Chew toys left in the crate with the dog should be a type that cannot be consumed (i.e. Kongs®).

Crates should be properly constructed and large enough for the dog’s comfort. A dog should be able to stand up, turn around and lie down.

Training Resources:

Marin Humane’s **Behavior & Training** conducts a monthly Crate Training Workshop. Sign up on our [Behavior & Training](#) page for the next available workshop.

Crates are available for purchase at the Marin Humane **Animal Outfitters Store**. Stop by our store or visit us online at: [Animal Outfitters](#). Please call 415.506.6229 to verify available stock.

Remember to license your dog (It’s the LAW)! If your dog gets lost, a license tag on your dog’s collar is the fastest way to reunite you and your dog. Even if your dog is microchipped, a license tag is immediately visible and doesn’t require a scanning device to read. For more information about licensing, microchipping, and other services provided by **Marin Humane**, visit us at MarinHumane.org or stop by at 171 Bel Marin Keys Blvd, Novato, CA.