



## Crate Training for Dogs and Puppies

### Why crate train?

Crates can be used as a temporary measure to keep dogs safe when they cannot be supervised, as an essential tool for efficient potty training, and can serve as a safe space for dogs that want to be left alone.

### Helpful crate training tips

- The crate should have soft, warm bedding and be covered with a blanket on all sides but the front side.
- It is okay to confine dogs for short periods of time for safety reasons. This is not mean or a punishment.
- Your dog should know that it can go to their crate to retreat and ask for alone time without fear of being forcefully removed from the crate whenever they are stressed or enjoying a high value treat. Never forcefully remove your dog from its crate!
- Keep the crate in a space that you frequently are in -- place the crate in a spot that is out of the way, but where your dog can see you and what is happening in the room. Don't place the crate in a lonely spot of your home.
- Most dogs whimper a bit when they first experience their crate. It is okay to verbally soothe them at first, but do so less and less over time. If your dog has an extreme response to being crated that involves escape, self-harm, or extreme vocalization, reach out to your trainer for help.
- The crate should be big enough for your dog to comfortably sit, stand, turn around, lay down, and stretch.

### Crate training steps

1. Give your dog a very special treat or [enrichment item](#) each time it must go into its crate. You can feed all meals in the crate, provide a special chewable, or give your dog a Kong with treats or food packed inside of the Kong during crate time.
2. To teach your dog to enter the crate, say "Crate!" And tap the top of your crate. Toss a high-value treat or two into the crate to encourage your dog to enter the crate. Don't close the crate door. Spend some time just getting your dog comfortable with entering the crate. High-value treats are things like hot dogs, cheese, roasted meat, Red Barn Roll, etc.
3. Once they have mastered entering the crate and are doing so without any [signs of fear](#), you can start building up duration, the amount of time your dog can be in the crate. Start tossing a few treats, your dog's meal, or longer lasting treats in the crate and close the crate door for 20 seconds. Rehearse this until your dog is not showing any signs of fear.

4. Very gradually increase the amount of time your dog spends in a closed crate, starting with less than one minute, and building up to three or four hours, if you anticipate needing that. Note that for the purpose of potty training, dogs and puppies will only need to spend about 30 minutes at a time in the crate.
5. In addition to building duration, you will also want to practice being in other rooms or out of the house while your dog is crated. Practice leaving your dog alone for less than a minute in the crate, and gradually build up to minutes, then hours.

If you are currently fostering a dog that is struggling with crate training, contact [training@otatpdx.org](mailto:training@otatpdx.org). If you are working with a dog you have adopted, please reach out to a humane, science-based trainer or behavior consultant for help.

*Disclaimer and waiver of liability*

By using the information presented here you agree to the following: In no event shall One Tail at a Time | PDX, its contractors, employees, partners, volunteers, affiliates, or board be liable for any direct, indirect, punitive, incidental, special, or consequential damages whatsoever arising out of or connected with the use or misuse of any information presented here. You agree and acknowledge that any training and behavior advice be used at your own risk and you should assess the risks individual to your animal(s), any animal(s) in your care, and those that interact with your animals/animals in your care before using any advice or information with or for any animal.