



# PAWS<sup>®</sup> CHICAGO

## TRAINING PROTOCOLS | Crate Training

Crate training a new dog or puppy can be an effective way to prevent destructive behavior, such as chewing on household items, as well as being a tool for housebreaking. Besides containing the dog until household rules can be taught, a crate takes advantage of a dog's instinct not to soil its sleeping place. Many dogs like the den-like atmosphere of a crate and will choose to sleep inside when the door is left open. A crate can serve as a safe and comfortable way of transporting a dog in a car and can be a familiar "home away from home" while traveling.

## Selecting a Crate

There are two popular types of crates, collapsible wire crates and plastic airline or Vari-Kennels. Both styles come in various sizes and are available on-line or at pet supply stores. Wire crates offer more air circulation and some styles come with a divider that expands the size of the crate. This can be a money saver when training a growing puppy. Plastic airline or Vari-Kennels provide more privacy and a den-like feel.

When housebreaking a puppy or adult dog, it is important that the crate is just big enough for the puppy/dog to stand up, turn around and lie down. If the crate is too large, the puppy /dog may choose to eliminate on one side of the crate and sleep on the other. If the dog is housebroken, buy a crate with more space so the dog can spread out and be comfortable.



Collapsible Wire Crate



Plastic Airline Crate

## Introducing the Dog to the Crate

Be patient; crate training can take several days or even weeks to complete. The goal is to associate the crate with something positive and avoid making the experience unpleasant for the dog. It is advisable to keep the crate in the bedroom overnight to observe the dog's behavior and to take it out to relieve itself if necessary.

### Step 1

Set up the crate in a convenient spot. If housebreaking a new puppy/dog, the crate can be moved into the bedroom at night if necessary (for puppies/dogs who need overnight crating, complete the first 3 steps before putting the dog in the crate overnight). Line the crate with a towel or blanket to make it comfortable for the dog. Make sure the crate door is securely fastened open, so the dog can walk in and out without the door swinging.

## Step 2

Lure the dog over to the crate with its favorite treats. Place a few treats inside the crate, close to the door, and let the dog eat them. Toss a few of the treats inside the crate and allow the dog to get used to going in and out. Do not force the dog in but allow it to go at its own pace. If the dog has a favorite toy, toss the toy in and allow the dog to retrieve it.

## Step 3

Next, begin feeding the dog its meals inside of the crate. Start by putting the dish all the way in the back of the crate. After a few meals, start closing the crate door while the dog is eating and then letting it out as soon as the meal is finished.

## Step 4

With each successive meal, leave the crate door closed a few minutes longer, working up to 10 minutes. If the dog starts to whine, back it up to the last place of success and then increase the time again. It is imperative that the dog is not whining when it is let out of the crate or it will learn that whining is the way to get the door to open.

## Step 5

To condition the dog for longer periods in the crate, prepare a long-lasting food toy such as a Kong stuffed with peanut butter or a bully stick. Bring the dog over to the crate with a treat. Give the cue "Crate" and toss in the treat. Once the dog enters the crate, give it the Kong or bully stick and close the door. Sit in the room with the dog and wait until it finishes the food toy. Wait a few minutes and let the dog out while it is still quiet.

# Crating the Dog When Left Alone

It is advisable to crate the dog with someone home for short periods to prevent the association with the crate and being left alone. Start by leaving the room for short periods while the dog is busy with its toy or relaxing. Gradually work this time up to about 30 minutes. Getting the dog used to being alone while in the crate is a good first step.

The next step is getting the dog used to being crated with no one home. This is usually best practiced on days off from work and for short periods of time first. Put the dog in the crate with stuffed Kong or bully stick about 15 minutes before leaving. Do not make a big deal of departure; keep it low key. The same follows on the return home. Wait until the dog is settled before opening the crate and keep excitement to a minimum.

Slowly increase the time the dog can be left alone to about 5 or 6 hours (for an adult dog). This is maximum time a dog should be crated. For a full work day schedule, employ a dog walker to come in to allow the dog time out of the crate to relieve itself and take a walk.

## Helpful Tips

- Young puppies have very little bladder control and from 8 to 12 weeks they may need to go out every hour. As they mature, a good rule for duration in the crate is: 3 months old - 3 hours, 4 months old - 4 hours, 5 months old - 5 hours, 6 months and older - 6 hours.
- Never use the crate as a form of punishment. It is possible however, to use the crate for a brief time-out when necessary. Always give the dog something pleasant to do in the crate such as a stuffed Kong or puzzle toy during time-outs.
- Do not allow children to play around the dog's crate or to handle the dog while in the crate.
- Make sure the dog had a walk and fully eliminated before leaving alone in the crate.
- It is advisable to remove the dog's collar before leaving alone in the crate. Tags or buckles can get stuck in the wires of the crate.