

A Safe Haven for Your Pup

A crate is a type of mobile cage. A crate can be used to transport your dog or confine her at times to help keep her safe and secure.



You might be concerned that putting your dog in a cage will be a negative experience. However, most dogs will learn to love their crate if you introduce it the right way.

It seems paradoxical, but training your pup to enjoy going into and remaining in a crate can actually allow her more freedom in the long run.

A crate is useful when toilet training your pup. She will not want to soil her rest area and will learn to hang on until she is allowed out for a toilet break.

If you are busy with an activity where you don't want your pup under your feet (including changing baby's nappy, painting the ceiling or making dinner) then your pup can go to her crate. Most pups would prefer to see what's going on than be banished to the back yard or another room.

The first step is to make the crate comfortable. Placing a padded bed or blanket in the crate is ideal. You might even consider an additional source of warmth in there, such as a heated wheat bag on cold days.

Put the crate in an area that you spend a lot of time in, so you can pop a couple of treats at the back of the crate for your dog to discover by accident. Attaching a chew toy, such as a stuffed kong, to the back of the crate will encourage your dog to stay in there for longer periods. Start to feed your dog in the crate. These activities should all be done with the door open.

Keeping Your Dog in A Crate

Once your dog is happily entering and exiting the crate, then start to put the behaviour on cue. Say "In your crate", toss a treat in and give verbal praise as she enters and eats it. After a short time, say "Out you get" and give only verbal praise for coming out.

Repeat this until your dog has clearly understood the concept. Then progress to saying "In your crate", expecting your dog to enter *before* you then drop a treat in and praise. If she does not enter after a short time, say "Too bad" and walk away with the treat in your hand. Try again later.



Practise Makes Perfect

A Fun Place to Relax

You can then start short sessions with your pup remaining in the crate for gradually longer periods. Offer appropriate chews in there at a time you know she is hungry. Allow her out while she is still relaxed and happy.

If your pup does become agitated it is important not to let her out at this stage, or you will reinforce unsettled behaviour. She can be ignored and allowed to settle on her own. If you feel the agitation is escalating then a short, sharp noise such as a whistle or hand clap (that she doesn't see has been made by you) will usually provide a short period of quiet. Your pup can then be released.

Ideally your pup will hardly ever be agitated when in her crate, as you will allow her to build confidence in the crate gradually. It is much better to finish on a good note while she is still calm.

Release your pup from the crate with "Out you get" and then ignore her for at least a few minutes. We want her to think the best things happen in her crate - not that she can't wait to get out to be made a fuss of.



If any agitation is shown in the crate, it would be best to do a few practise sessions that are of shorter duration. These sessions allow you to finish on a good note. Longer periods can then be introduced again.

Start sessions with the door closed while you are still present. Progress to short departures away from the crate, and gradually increase the time that your dog is left alone.



The crate can be a suitable sleeping spot for dogs overnight. However, it should not be used for hours on end through the day. Your dog's toileting, exercise and stimulation needs cannot be met by keeping her in a crate for long periods on a daily basis.

Never use the crate as a place to send your pup for punishment - we want crates to mean relaxed, fun times. In fact, many dogs come to think of their crate as a safe haven. With the right approach, a crate can become one of your pup's favourite places.

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