

Crate Training Basics
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If a new dog joined your family during the holidays, congratulations! You may have heard that crate training your dog is a good idea and are wondering how it should be done. Crate training can be a helpful tool in housetraining and in preventing destructiveness, but it is not a cure-all and not all dogs need to be crate trained. Crating is not recommended for dogs with separation anxiety. If you decide to crate train your dog, here are some points to consider.

Obtain a crate that allows your dog to stand up fully, turn around and lie down comfortably.

Go slow. Gradually introduce your dog to the crate over a period of several days. Introducing your dog too quickly can cause fear or panic.

Help your dog want to go into the crate by tossing treats and toys inside. You may also feed your dog her meals in the crate for a day or so. Your goal is to convince your dog that the crate is not scary but welcoming.

Put your dog in the crate with you in sight. Put an irresistible chew toy in the crate and close the door for just a few minutes. Let your dog out, but don't fuss over her. Repeat for a few minutes longer. Don't over do these repetitions. Give your dog plenty of free time in between. Work up to crating your dog for about 20 minutes, but keep the crate near you.

Crate your dog for less than 20 minutes while you are doing other things around the house. Come back into the room frequently so your dog knows you are nearby, ignore her, and then walk away again. Slowly stay out of sight longer without increasing the total time your dog is crated beyond 20 minutes. Only then should you begin practicing crating times longer than 20 minutes. You can also try crating your dog overnight, but the crate should be moved to your bedroom.

Introduce your dog to being left alone while crated. Quietly put your dog in her crate with her special toy. ***Take your dog's collar off to prevent injuries.*** Calmly leave the house for less than 30 minutes. If possible, video or audiotape your dog to be sure she is calm and relaxed. Gradually increase the length of your absences. Continue to crate your dog briefly when you are home, so crating doesn't equal being left alone in your dog's mind.

Crating should be a short-term management and training tool, and not a way of life, 8 hours a day, 5 days a week. Transition your dog to be left alone in the house gradually; similar to the way you accustomed her to being crated. For more detailed information, see our video/DVD "Crate Training The Right Way" available in PETsMART Stores.

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