

Crate Training

Training your dog to accept and enjoy their crate is helpful in many ways including potty training, managing destructive behavior, and creating a routine for you and your dog. Dogs that have been trained to enjoy their crates perceive their crate as people perceive their bedroom; it is a safe, comfortable place to get away from the rest of the house and a place to rest.

What size crate should you buy?

Purchase a crate that will be large enough for the dog to stand up in, turn around, and lay down. You may have to buy a few crates as your dog grows. The crate should not be large enough for the dog to wander around inside of. Some wire crate products come with a divider so you can purchase one crate and adjust the size as the dog grows.

Train your dog to love the crate

Begin by putting your dog on leash and bringing them to the kennel. With the kennel door open sit or kneel next to the open kennel. Anchor the leash by sitting on it or putting your foot on it while you are working; this way the dog can move around a little but cannot wander too far away. Toss a few treats in the kennel and wait for the dog to go into the kennel. All four feet must be in the kennel, do not push your dog into the kennel or close the door forcing the dog in.

When the dog is all the way inside the kennel, close the door but do not lock it. Hold the door closed with your hand or foot and wait for the dog to sit. As soon as your dog is sitting start treating the dog through the kennel bars either by feeding directly from your fingers or by dropping treats into the kennel. You should be



Additional Resources

Please contact our Behavior Team to speak with a skilled behavior specialist.

BehaviorTeam@spca.org

214-461-5169

www.spca.org/petuniversity

For more information, look for Susan Garrett's DVD *Crate Games* available online.

giving one treat after another very rapidly in the beginning. If the dog remains sitting continue giving treats but if he stands up stop giving treats until he sits again.

As soon as your dog is sitting without standing up, you can start to crack the kennel door and feed him through the open door. If the dog stands up, close the kennel door and wait until he sits and then try opening again and feed him while he is sitting. By doing this, the dog will learn that remaining sitting is the preferred behavior in the kennel and if he stands up the kennel door will shut and he will not receive any treats.

If the dog comes out of the kennel do not give him any attention or treats until he returns to the kennel. As soon as he goes back in the kennel resume from the beginning; close the door, wait for sit, crack the door, feed while sitting, etc.

Repeat these steps in short sessions, about 10 minutes each, until the dog is going in the kennel on his own, sitting when the door is closed and remains in the kennel sitting when you open the door before you move on to increasing criteria. Increasing criteria means to make it a little harder. The first criteria to increase after your dog is willingly going into the kennel and sitting with the door open is to reward less frequently. Instead of feeding your dog in rapid succession, feed him every 2-3 seconds, then every 3-5 seconds, then every 5-7 seconds, and so on. As soon as you have enough time in between treats you will begin to move around between treats. At first, this might mean kneeling if you were previously sitting, standing up if you were kneeling, taking a step away and then returning, etc. Be sure to close the door if your dog stands up and wait for him to sit again. At the point that you start moving around your dog should easily remain sitting in his kennel since he has been successfully taught that getting up from a sitting position means that the door will close. If your dog has not learned this foundational rule, go back to the beginning and work more diligently on the beginning steps.

Rules to remember:

Dog in kennel = deliver treats frequently.

Dog sitting in kennel = open kennel door, continue delivering treats frequently.

Dog stands up in kennel = close kennel door.

Dog comes out of kennel = no treats.

Do not rush through if you want to successfully teach your dog that being in the kennel is a great place to be. Take your time and go at a rate that your dog is successful.

After following these steps your dog will learn that being inside the kennel is a great place to be.

For more information on making your dog's crate a safe and fun place to be, look for Susan Garrett's DVD [Crate Games](#) available online.