



RSPCA School for Dogs Information Sheet

Crate Training a Puppy or Adult Dog

Why should I crate my dog?

Teaching your dog to settle happily in a crate is particularly useful when toilet training a puppy or an older dog. Crating also helps prevent destructive or obnoxious behaviours when you can't be present to supervise; provides a secure place to rest when family activity gets too much; gives you the option of safely transporting your dog on planes, in cars etc.; and lets you take your dog to dog sport events such as Flyball and Agility without the dog needing supervision all day.



It is much kinder to set your dog up to learn calm relaxed human appropriate behaviour than to leave a dog to develop his/her own behaviours without your guidance.

Please note: A crate should NEVER, NEVER be used as a punishment as it is supposed to be a calm and relaxed place.

For more benefits of having a crate trained dog, refer to our info sheet of the same name!

What sort of crate?

There are a variety of crates available on the market. For training purposes we recommend a collapsible metal crate. If you intend transporting your dog on an aircraft a plastic travel crate may be worth the investment. If you compete in dog sports with your dog, a lightweight canvas crate will be suitable after the dog has learned good behaviour in a crate. The crate should be sized so that there is just enough room for him/her to stand up and turn around and lie down comfortably.

Where to locate the crate

Inside the house is the best option as this allows your puppy or dog to be a part of the family. Place the crate in a quiet area, close to where the family spends most of their time. In the crate place soft bedding and ensure you cover up the entry of a metal crate with duct tape to avoid your dog catching his feet.

Giving the crate high value

You want your dog to love their crate - and choose to spend time inside. To do this, we need to make the crate a rewarding place for our dogs to be. If your dog will already willingly enter their crate, we can begin to increase the value of this experience to teach the dog to really love the crate.



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- First, pin back the crate door so it can't swing shut suddenly and scare your dog.
- If your dog is unsure of the crate, place some treats just outside the door first.
- Then, place a few treats in the crate and see if your dog will go in on his own. Let your dog go in and out freely making sure you replace the treats frequently to encourage him.
- Begin feeding your dog meals in the crate, placing the bowl to encourage your dog into the crate a little further each time.
- At this stage of training, your dog should be allowed to enter and leave the crate willingly. Don't be tempted to shut the door yet!
- Only when your dog is very comfortable being in the crate, shut the door for 1 second while he is occupied with his dinner, a chew, or food toy such as a filled Kong.
- Increase the time with the door shut by 2-3 seconds at a time.
- If this process is done too quickly the dog will not learn to love the crate and will not see it as a restful retreat
- Gradually increase the time until your dog is spending 15 minutes in the crate, then step outside the room for 1 second.
- Increase the time with the door shut by 2-3 seconds at a time.
- If your dog starts to vocalize or scratch you have extended the time too quickly, back up a few steps and try again.

The process may take several days or even weeks depending on your dog's temperament. It is important to only proceed to the next step when your dog is comfortable with the present situation.

Length of time

A dog should not be left in his crate for longer than he can cope with. For most dogs, 3-4 hours is maximum, however, this is only if your dog is fully crate trained already. A crate is not an all-day solution!

For puppies, do not leave them in the crate for longer than their bladder can cope. (Puppies 1 hour for every month of age, i.e. 2 months old = 2 hours maximum). There must be water available inside the crate.

Crate games

Once your dog is comfortable entering and leaving his crate, start to add fun games to increase the crate's value even more.

First in!

Teach your dog to run into their crate as fast as they can. Have some high value treats and show them to your dog. Walk fast to the crate and say a cue word or phrase enthusiastically such as "crate!" or "into bed!"



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Once you reach the crate, toss the treats into the back of the crate. Each time you play the game, walk/run a bit faster to the crate. Soon, upon saying your cue word, your dog will try and beat you to the crate.

You're in/you're out

First, you'll need some high-value treats, like chicken, beef, cheese or ham. Use treats that your dog really loves. Sprinkle some treats into the crate. Allow your dog to go in and get the treats. Then wait. If they come back out of the crate, say or do nothing! Wait until your dog chooses to go back in. If they do, reward them highly with food. If they don't, go back a step and encourage them to go in with some treats.

The aim of the game is for your dog to choose to go into his crate, without you even asking as all the good stuff happens in there.

For more fun crate games, see Susan Garrett's Crate Games DVD.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ebjBo_spqG0

Problem Solving

My dog won't enter the crate:

Are your rewards rewarding enough for your dog?

Take the tray out of the crate and encourage the dog to put one paw into the tray, rewarding each time the dog puts a paw in the tray. After five successful repetitions only reward if the dog puts two feet in the tray. If the dog refuses to offer any behaviour take a break and come back to it later.

Keep each training session short and fun!

Always finish before either of you start losing interest or get frustrated. (Don't say - "just one more time!")

My dog doesn't want to come out of the crate!

Wow what a great trainer you are, the crate is such a rewarding place to be your dog just loves it, well done.....don't worry they will come out, but you will have to balance up how much fun they have in AND out of the crate!

My dog liked it before but won't go in it now!

For whatever reason your dog used to love their crate and won't even look at it now doesn't really matter because we will never know for sure!

Go back to step one and retrain but take it very slowly making every step more exciting than it was before. You may need to try a different crate, put it in a different position, or put a cover over it!

My dog barks at everyone walking past when he is in his crate!

Put a cover over the crate so your dog can't see people/dogs approaching from all sides, place a bowl of treats on top and encourage everyone walking past to drop a few treats in from the top of the crate. If your dog only barks at other dogs ask their owners to drop some treats in your dog's crate and take a few for their dog! (or drop some in yourself).



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Very quickly your dog will learn that people/dogs approaching means treats will arrive, removing the need to bark!

Always reward your dog when they are quiet.

If your dog is going to be crated in a highly stimulating environment (noise/activity) remember that you will need to reduce the duration back to a few seconds and build it up all over again.

Finally...

A crate can be a wonderful management tool for your dog; however, a crate is not the ultimate solution for every behavioural problem. If your dog becomes distressed or anxious at any stage, seek personal advice from the trainers at RSPCA School for Dogs.

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