



Crate Acclimation Training Plan

Thank you for welcoming your new dog into your heart and home! We hope that you have many happy years together. A crate is an important tool for keeping your dog safe when you cannot supervise them, but can be frightening if not introduced properly.

WHAT KIND OF CRATE?

The crate should be big enough that the dog can stand up and turn around. It is recommended that a wire or metal crate be used both for your dog's safety and so that the crate can be collapsed and transported. Fabric crates can be used only with supervision.

REQUIRED SUPPLIES

- Your dog
- You
- A crate

STEP ONE: PREPARE

It is important to meet your dog's mental and physical needs with activities such as training, a long sniffy walk, a trip to the park, or anything that works both their body and brain. If these needs are met, your dog will be better able to settle and relax. If you are using a frozen kong or other enrichment item, make sure it is ready to go before you need it. You can also make the room a relaxing place to be by darkening the lights, covering the crate, playing soft music, and spraying soothing scents.

Tip: Scents like lavender and vanilla have been proven to have the same relaxing effects on dogs that they do on people!

STEP TWO: ACCLIMATE

Open every door on the crate and drop treats in from above. Allow the dog to wander in and out as they are comfortable. Reward them for entering and staying in the crate. When they are comfortable entering, lingering, and exiting, you can begin to feed meals in the crate. Then shut the door as your dog eats.

Tip: It is important that you create a positive association. Do not shut the door and leave the dog while you are acclimating.



STEP THREE: DURATION

Start closing the door and leaving the dog for short periods. If they start to cry, give them a few minutes to see if they settle. Sometimes dogs will cry from frustration and sometimes they will cry from fear. If they settle after a short period, they are experiencing frustration while a persistent cry is fear. Do not leave a fearful dog to cry. They may learn not to cry, but they will not unlearn the fear. If a fearful dog begins to cry, go back and let them out. Then, decrease your time.

Slowly build up the time your dog can tolerate being crate. Go at their pace! It can be tempting to rush, but it is much easier to teach calm behavior at first than to teach them to not be fearful. Practice in short sessions and only push their limit a few times, not every time.

Tip: Sometimes crate the dog and stay in the room so that the crate does not become a cue for you leaving.