

TRAINING RESOURCES



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HOW TO CRATE TRAIN AN ADULT DOG

Perhaps your dog is an adult and was never properly house trained. Or you have to move across the country and need to put him in a crate for the trip. Or maybe the pooch has just started acting out in destructive ways while you're away from the house. There are many reasons why you might need to train your adult dog to sit calmly and quietly in a crate.

Unfortunately, this is something that can cause harm to your dog if you don't do it in the right way. What you don't want is for your pooch to panic in the crate and end up getting hurt.

Crates provide safe havens and dens for dogs. They calm them and can help prevent destructive chewing, barking and housetraining mistakes. Puppies should not be crated for more hours than they are months old, plus one. For example, a 4-month old should not be crated longer than 5 hours. How long an adult dog can be crated will depend on many factors. For example, if your foster dog was left outside, it has never been required to hold it for any period of time. It will take time for this dog to learn to hold it and you will need to start slowly. Older dogs and dogs with medical conditions may only be able to successfully hold it for short periods of time.

Rigorous exercise should be given before and after any long periods in the crate, and good chew toys should be in the crate at all times. You may want to crate your new foster dog for the first few nights in your bedroom – most of them feel more secure in their crate and it protects your house from accidents.



Crates should **NEVER** be used as a means of punishment for your foster dog. If used for punishing the dog will learn to avoid going in the crate. Crates are not to be used for keeping puppies under 6 months out of mischief all day either. Crates should be thought of as dog playrooms – just like child playrooms, with games and toys. It should be a place dogs like to be and feel safe and secure when they are there.

Introducing the crate

Place the crate (with blanket inside) in a central part of your home. Introduce your foster dog to the crate after a good walk, when he's tired and sleepy. Keep all chew toys in the crate so that he can go in and out as he pleases, selecting toys to play with. Feed your dog in the crate with the door open. If the dog hesitates going in, place the bowl inside the door so their head is in and their body is outside.

If your foster still refuses to go near the crate, put the smelliest, tastiest wet food (or a steak!) in the crate and shut the door. Let the dog hang outside the crate for a while, smelling the food inside. Soon he should beg you to let him in!

Now that the dog is familiar with and willing to go near the crate, throw some of his favorite treats in the crate. Let him go in and get them and come right out again. Do this exercise three or four times. Then, throw more treats in and let him go in and get them. When he is in, shut the door and give him another treat through the door. Then let him out and ignore him for 3 minutes. Then, put some more treats in the crate, let him go in, shut the door and feed him 5 bits of treats through the door, and then let him out and ignore him for 5 minutes.

Next time, place treats, peanut butter, freeze-dried liver or frozen food and honey in a Kong, so it is time-consuming to get the food out of the ball, and put the Kong in the crate. After your foster has gone in, shut the door and talk to him in a calm voice. If your dog starts to whine and cry, don't talk to him or you will reward the whining/crying/barking behavior. The foster dog must be quiet for a few minutes before you let him out.

Gradually increase the time in the crate until the dog can spend 3-4 hours in there. We recommend leaving a radio (soothing music or talk radio) or TV (mellow stations: educational, art, food) on while the dog is in the crate and alone in the house. Rotate the dog's toys from day to day so he doesn't become bored of them. Don't put papers in the crate – the dog will instinctively not go to the bathroom where he sleeps/lives. Instead, put a blanket or crate bed in his crate to endorse the fact that this is his cozy home.

To help your foster get accustomed to the crate, place his favorite bed inside it and place it in your bedroom. If you're fostering a puppy, you can try placing a warm hot water bottle wrapped in towel next to him. Warmth makes puppies sleepy. Make sure the sides of the bedding are tucked in firmly so the puppies don't get lost or suffocated in a fold of the bedding. Be wary of dog crates during hot weather – a dog may want to lie on the cool floor instead of the crate. Make sure the crate is not in the direct sun.