



Crate Training

Being able to be crated is an essential skill for all dogs, regardless of breed or age. Throughout a dog's life there will be times when a crate is vital for their safety. A crate trained dog can easily travel by car or plane. They can be crated at the groomer and vet. They will have a much easier time tolerating to crate rest after a surgery or injury. And for puppies the crate provides a safe space for them to rest and can greatly help with housebreaking.

It's normal for puppies and dogs to protest the crate at the start of crate training, especially if they have had zero exposure to confinement. But when conditioned properly and with patience, most dogs can learn to see the crate as a relaxing place to nap, eat their meal, chew a bone, etc. Traditional crate training approaches rely heavily on letting the dog "cry it out" in the crate until they're simply too exhausted to continue to protest or using food or chews as pacifiers in the crate. Some crate train by starting with crate games, gradually increasing duration in the crate, and rewarding calm behavior in the crate.

Many owners and trainers alike use a little bit of each of these approaches depending on the dog and the situation. With dedication to training, you can create happy crating for life for your dog!

Here are a few basic tips for crate training.

- 1.) First and foremost, make sure your dog is given enough biological fulfillment (exercise, enrichment, play, etc.) prior to being crated.
- 2.) Crate your dog during their natural sleeping times during the day and at night, so they are more inclined to sleep when in the crate and build an association with the crate and rest.
- 3.) Feed meals in the crate, and/or use your dog's meals as rewards during crate games, to build a positive association with the crate.
- 4.) Reward the dog for calm behavior in the crate by letting them out when they are calm.
- 5.) When possible, practice crating in different environments (in the car, at events, in hotels, in other people's houses, etc.).

All dogs are different, and crate training may not look the same for every dog. Don't be afraid to ask a trainer for help if you're really struggling with crate training.

Crate Sizing

Generally you want your crate to be large enough for your dog to stand and lay down comfortably, but not so large that they can pee or poo on one side and sleep on the other. A good rule of thumb is that your dog should be able to stand comfortably in the crate without having to hunch over, turn around completely in the crate, and when laying down their front paws clear the front of the crate. Your dog may go through different sizes of crates as they grow!



This crate is the **RIGHT** size for your dog



This crate is the **WRONG** size for your dog



This crate is the **RIGHT** size for your dog



This crate is the **WRONG** size for your dog

Below are some more common crates and their strengths and weaknesses.

Plastic Crates

Petmate and Sky Kennel are popular brands of plastic crates. These crates have a rigid (but relatively thin) plastic body and a metal wire door.



Strengths: These crates are approved by most airlines for use in cargo, can easily be deconstructed and stored, and are relatively lightweight.

Weaknesses: These crates are not crash tested for use in cars. Dogs that are determined enough can likely chew through the plastic body and bend the metal wire door.

Wire Crates

These crates are very popular for use in homes. They are metal wire that is usually coated in paint. Many come with double door and can be folded flat. They can be cheaper than their plastic counterparts.



Strengths: These crates can be folded down which makes storing and moving them easy. They also allow dogs to see everything outside of the crate. They are relatively inexpensive compared to their plastic counterparts. Most come with a tray on the bottom which can be removed easily for cleaning.

Weaknesses: These crates are not crash tested for use in cars. Dogs that are determined enough can bend the wires and chew the plastic bottom tray. Dogs that wear collars or harnesses in their crates can also easily get their gear caught on the wire parts of the door/sides.

Soft Sided Crates

These crates are very popular for use in homes and for travel, since they are lightweight and can be folded down.



Strengths: These crates are lightweight and can be folded down which makes storing and moving them easy. Small dogs can use these to fly in-cabin on flights.

Weaknesses: These crates are not crash tested for use in cars. Dogs that are determined enough can easily rip through the fabric and mesh.

Crash Tested Crates

These crates are safest for use in cars. Gunner Kennels (left) are the only crates on the market that have excelled in crash testing, but Ruff Land Kennels (right) come close safety-wise in cars and are another popular option.

These crates are much pricier than most common crates.



Strengths: These crates are the safest options for travel in cars. They are also quite difficult (but not impossible) for dogs to escape from. Both companies offer many accessories and modifications for these crates.

Weaknesses: These crates are quite heavy and cannot be folded or broken down. They are also quite enclosed, which can be stressful for dogs with true confinement anxiety. Neither are airline-approved, but the Ruff Land Kennel can be modified to meet most airlines' requirements.

There are many other crate options available, including crates for high anxiety, "escape proof" crates, and crates that can be custom ordered to fit your car or home.