

Teaching your dog to love his or her crate is one of the best things you can do. Dogs are denning creatures by nature so crate training isn't usually difficult when done correctly. Giving your dog "his or her own room" can help him or her feel more secure and will help you feel confident that he or she's safe when you can't be watching. There are many reasons to crate train your dog, such as: **potty training, preventing chewing and destruction, keeping him safe while traveling, and giving him a safe place to be when other people (i.e. workmen, non-dog lovers, large groups, etc) are over.** Here are some tips on selecting the right crate and acclimating your dog to it:

- The crate should be large enough for him or her to stand up without hitting his or her head, turn around completely, and lie down comfortably.
- If your dog's not fully-grown, the wire kennels that come with a divider panel are the best choice. You can purchase the size he or she will need as an adult and use the divider to make it smaller if necessary. If you're purchasing a crate for an adult dog, wire or plastic is a personal choice. The wire kennels allow more airflow, more visibility for your dog, can be covered if your dog prefers a more secluded environment, and fold flat for traveling and storage. The plastic kennels are airline approved, safe for car travel, and provide a more "den-like" environment.
- Whether or not you leave a bed in the crate is also a personal choice. If the crate is the correct size and yet your dog is eliminating in it, the problem might be the absorbent material of the bed or towel. Taking it out of the kennel (so it's just the plastic flooring) might solve that. Some dogs will chew up and eat their bed while in the kennel. For those dogs, beds should not be used. If your dog is safe with a bed in their kennel, by all means let him have one.
- Leaving water in the kennel is another personal choice. Obviously, if he will be in there for an extended amount of time, he should have water. Just remember that he or she will then need a chance to eliminate. There are a few types of water containers that hook onto the bars/door of the kennel so he or she doesn't spill water all over the kennel.
- Toys are another personal preference. Safe, durable toys (like Kongs or Nylabones) are often the best choice as they provide something to chew on, but are generally safe for most dogs. Some dogs may be fine with a stuffed animal while others will destroy/eat it. Know your dog before you decide what to leave in the kennel with him unattended.

Now that you know about the crate and what to include, you're probably wondering, "How do I get him or her in it?"

- Make being inside the kennel relaxing and rewarding. Place yummy treats in there, let him or her chew on chew bones in there, praise him or her when in the kennel, and try to make it a fun place. At first you may want to leave the door open so he or she can come and go freely. You may even want to place his or her food and water bowls in the back of the kennel (with the door open) so he or she stands in there to eat.
- As he or she gets comfortable in there, you can shut the door and toss in a treat (through the wires). Try to let him or her out before he or she becomes uncomfortable or anxious. Gradually leave him or her in longer and longer before you let him or her out. At first it may just be 30 seconds or a minute, but you'll be able to work your way up quickly. Leaving him or her with a tasty chew bone or stuffed Kong often works. Having a *special* treat or chew that he or she *only* get in the kennel can make it more appealing.
- Soon he or she should associate the kennel with relaxation and yummy treats. Make sure to put him or her in the kennel when you're in the same room and work your way up to leaving the room. If you only use it when you leave the house, he or she will learn that going into the kennel predicts being left alone and he or she might not like it.
- If, at some point, he or she begins to cry/bark/whine in the kennel and you know he or she doesn't need to go out to eliminate, you should still go check on them to ensure they are safe. Keep it low key, check on them quickly and identify if they have a need. While we don't want to reward inappropriate behavior, "crying it out" can cause other behavioral issues. We do want him or her to learn that calm, quiet behavior is the way to get out of the kennel, so be sure to reward quiet with plenty of time out of the crate.