

***Crate training, when done with positive reinforcement, provides a safe, secure space for dogs. Far from being a penalty, a crate can help with potty training, prevent destructive behaviors, and teach dogs to settle down. A properly used crate becomes a dog's private space, much like a child's bedroom, where they can rest and feel secure.***

**Choosing a Crate:** Common crate types include wire, plastic, and fabric crates. Fabric crates are good for travel but not for long-term use. Wire crates are economical and fold for storage, while plastic crates are more secure with solid walls. Select a crate large enough for your dog to stand, turn around, and lie down comfortably—too much space can encourage accidents. Use a divider in wire crates or a box in plastic ones to adjust size as your dog grows. Place the crate in an accessible, low-traffic area.

**Making the Crate a Positive Place:** Start by introducing the crate gradually. Toss treats inside with the door open, allowing your dog to enter and exit freely. Once comfortable, close the door for short periods. Add a familiar bed or mat to make the crate cozy, and begin feeding your dog in the crate. Gradually close the door while feeding, reinforcing the crate as a positive space. Never use the crate as punishment or for

**Adding Cues:** When your dog enters willingly, add a cue like “crate” or “bed” before tossing a treat inside. Soon, they will enter on cue. Also, introduce a cue for leaving the crate, such as “OK” or “free.” This reinforces calm behavior and self-control.

**Building Duration:** Start by leaving your dog in the crate for short periods, gradually increasing the time. If your dog whines, wait for calm behavior before letting them out. Use a chew toy or stuffed Kong to keep them busy during longer crate sessions. Throughout the training process, it is important to be patient and not to push your dog. Ask for what your dog is comfortable with rather than forcing your dog to do what you want.

**When the Dog Needs Extra Support:** If your dog struggles with the crate, avoid letting them out when they whine or cry. Wait for calm behavior before opening the door. If needed, place the crate beside your bed during the first few nights to help your dog feel secure. Gradually move the crate away as they become more comfortable.

**Chill Time:** Dogs, especially puppies, need downtime. Use the crate proactively to give your dog breaks, allowing them to rest and recharge. This will help prevent overtiredness and undesirable behaviors.

**Crate Training for Travel:** Crate training also benefits travel, vet visits, and dog sports. With positive reinforcement, your dog will learn to love their crate and use it as a safe, secure place when needed.

*A crate or kennel can provide dogs with a sense of **safety and security** and serve as a **valuable tool** for pet owners. Like any training method, using the training method appropriately, paired with positive reinforcement, patience and allowing the dog to go at their own pace is key.*