

The Happy Hound

Havin' Fun with Tricks & Good Manners!

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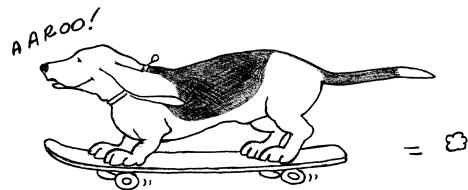
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Crate Training in a Nutshell

Okay, here's the quick and dirty on crate training.

1. Make sure your dog's crate is located in an area that is close to where the action is. The crate is not meant to be part of a Siberian Gulag. It's a management tool so that your dog can be close to where the action is, but not in the middle of all the action.
2. Make the crate as comfortable as possible. It needs to be big enough so that your dog can comfortably get up and turn around and lay down in it.
3. Start feeding your dog, at least a portion of every meal in his crate. At first put the food in first—as your dog runs in, say "Go to your crate!" Leave the door open at first.
4. In a couple of days, switch the sequence, with dinner in your hand, say "Go to your crate!" and as soon as your dog is in the crate give him his dinner. Close the door for a minute. The next meal 2 minutes, the next 3 minutes, etc. Gradually increasing the amount of time your dog is in the crate with the door shut at mealtimes. By the time you're up to 5 minutes, start wandering in and out of the room—you may have to drop the time back down to 1 minute again, and build back up from here.
5. During the day, throw treats in the crate, say "Go to your crate!" After a couple days, switch the order of this. "Go to your crate!" – and if your dog does, then give a treat. Practice the door closing during the day as well. With the treats (in addition to the meals), you can practice multiple times in a day. Set aside a weekend, to do intensive crate training.

Note: Do not simply pop your dog in the crate and go away for 8 hours on the first day. Work up to 8 hours gradually by spending a lot of time at the small end of the scale. Good 15, 20, 30 minute cratings will make the longer ones easier to get to.

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6. Let your dog sleep in the crate at night. With the door shut.

Your goal is to crate your dog **without** a panic attack or a meltdown. You want to limit your dog's time in the crate so that the panic attack or meltdown NEVER HAPPENS. If it does, you've got a whole 'nother problem on your hands, so just don't go there.

You don't want to reward your dog for fussing in the crate, by releasing him while fussing. You want your dog to calmly trust that you will eventually let him out of the crate when you decide the time is right. This is not a decision a dog wants to make, or should make.

So....don't crate your dog until he's been clearly pottied. Don't crate your dog without some sort of compensation (treat/meal/toy). **Make the crate fun.** Turn "Go to your crate" into a game. **Going to the crate ALWAYS results in some sort of treat.** Whatever you do, don't set your dog up to fail.

You can work quickly, if you stick to small increments and frequent "training" sessions.

Good luck!