

Crate Training



Ten Quick Crate Training Tips

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- 1. Toss irresistibly yummy treats inside the open crate.** If your dog hesitates to go inside, toss them just inside the crate so he can stand outside and eat them. If that is still to scary, scatter treats outside the crate until he is comfortable in its presence. Each time he eats a treat, click your clicker, or use your verbal marker to indicate he has performed a reward-able behavior. Yes, you are marking the behavior of eating a treat! If you time it so that you use your marker just before he eats the treat, you do not need to feed another treat after the marker. If your marker is late, then give him a second treat as well.
- 2. Toss treats incrementally farther into the crate** until he is stepping inside the crate to get them. Drop them in through the top of a wire crate, or the side grates, to position them deeper in the crate. Click each time he eats a treat.
- 3. When he will enter the crate easily, click and give him treats while he is still inside.** If he stays in, keep clicking and giving him treats. It is okay if he comes out; toss another treat and wait for him to re-enter. Do not force him to go in or stay in.
- 4. When he enters the crate to get treats without hesitation, start using a verbal cue** such as "Go to bed!" or "Load up!" as he enters. You will eventually be able to send him into his crate with a verbal cue.
- 5. When he is happy staying in the crate, gently swing the door closed.** Do not latch it! Click, treat, then open the door and allow him to exit the crate.
- 6. Gradually increase the time you keep your dog contained in the crate** with the door closed before you click (or use a verbal reward marker) and give him a treat. Sometimes click and reward him without opening the door right away.
- 7. When he will stay in the crate with the door closed for at least 10 seconds** without exhibiting any distress, close the door, latch it, and take one-step away. Click, return, reward, and open the door.
- 8. Repeat the previous step, varying the time and distance you spend away from the crate.** Intersperse longer durations with shorter ones, so it does not only grow increasingly more difficult for him to earn a reward. Increase the number of times you click and treat without opening the door, but remember that a click (or other reward marker, such as "Yes!") must always be followed by a treat.
- 9. Leave the crate open when you are not actively training.** Toss Treats and favorite toys in the crate when your dog is not looking so he never knows what surprises he might find in there. You can even feed him his meals in the crate to help him realize his crate is truly wonderful.
- 10. Another trick to motivate him to want to go into the crate is to take a particularly smelly, enticing, food stuffed Kong or marrow bone and tie it to the back of the crate, inside.** Close the door so he cannot get in. His frustration at not being able to get it will motivate him to go in later when you do open the door.

Some dogs can do the whole crate-training program in one day. Some take several days, and a few will take weeks or more. If your dog whines or fusses about being in the crate, do not let him out until he stops crying—unless you think he may legitimately have to go to the bathroom, or he's having a panic attack. Otherwise, wait for a few seconds of quiet, then click and reward. Then briefly work, with shorter periods of time between clicks and treats. When he will happily enter his crate in the house and stay in it for extended periods of time without protest, you're ready to move his crate to the car for more training fun.

