



# Crate Training

## Objective: Teach Fido to be “crate trained”

### Why this is important...

- a. Provides a safe haven for Fido
- b. Can be used as a management tool
- c. Can be used to assist in potty training
- d. Safest way to travel in the car

### 1. Prepare the crate

- a. Crate must be large enough to stand up, turn around and lie down comfortably.
- b. If you want to get one large enough for your puppy to grow into, block off the back so he has just enough room, and increase the space as he grows.
- c. Cover the floor of the crate with a rug or soft pad to make it comfortable and inviting.

### 2. Work in a quiet place without distractions

- a. Start with the crate door open, and toss some irresistibly yummy treats inside.
- b. If Fido is hesitant to go in after them, toss them close enough to the doorway that he can stand outside and just poke his nose in the crate to eat them.
- c. Each time Fido eats a treat, **Click!**
- d. Gradually toss the treats farther and farther into the crate until he is stepping inside to get them.
- e. Continue to **Click!** each time he eats a treat.
- f. When entering the crate easily to get the treats, **Click!** and offer a treat while still inside. If Fido is willing to stay inside, keep treating.
- g. If he comes out that's okay too, just toss another treat inside and wait for him to re-enter.
- h. When Fido is entering the crate to get the treat without hesitation, you can start using a verbal cue such as “**Go to bed**” or “**Kennel**” or “**Crate up!**” as he goes in. You will eventually be able to send him into his crate on just a verbal cue.

### 3. Closing the door

- a. When Fido is comfortable going in and out of the crate gently swing the door closed. *Don't latch it!* **Click!** and treat through the closed door, then open the door.
- b. Repeat this step, gradually increasing the length of time the door stays closed before you **Click!**
- c. You can **Click!** and treat in the crate without opening the door.
- d. When Fido is comfortably staying in the crate, provide him with a long-lasting, tasty treat (stuffed Kong), let him enjoy while you sit nearby.

#### 4. Advanced

- a. When Fido is staying in the crate with the door closed for at least ten seconds without any signs of anxiety, close the door, latch it, and take one step away from the crate. **Click!** Return to the crate, reward, and open the door.
- b. Repeat this step, varying the time and distance you leave the crate.
- c. Don't always make leaving the crate longer and farther – intersperse long ones with shorter ones so it doesn't always get harder and harder for him.
- d. Start increasing the number of times you **Click!** and treat without opening the door, but remember that a **Click!** always gets a treat.

### Training Tips and Notes

1. Leave the crate open when you aren't actively training.
2. Toss treats and Fido's favorite toys in the crate when he's not looking, so he never knows what wonderful surprises he might find there.
3. You can even feed him his meals in the crate – with the door open – to help him realize that his crate is a truly wonderful place.
4. Sometimes dogs and often puppies can do the whole crate training program in one day. Some will take several days, and a few will take weeks or more. If at any time during the program your dog whines or fusses about being in the crate, *don't let them out until they stop crying!* This is the biggest mistake owners make when crate training! Instead, wait for a few seconds of quiet, then **Click!** and reward. ***Waiting does not apply when your puppy has been crated long enough that he needs to relieve himself.*** Then back up a step or two in the training program. When he is doing well at that level again, increase the difficulty in smaller increments, and vary the times rather than constantly making it more difficult.
  - a. For example, instead of going from five seconds to ten to fifteen, start with five seconds, then seven, then three, then eight, then six, then four, then eight, and so on. *This is a vital part of a successful crate training program.* If you let Fido out when he is fussing, you will teach him that fussing gets him free.
5. If, however, Fido panics to the point of risking injury to himself, *you must let him out.* You may have a dog with a Separation Anxiety challenge.
  - a. A crate is generally not recommended for dogs with Separation Anxiety, since they tend to panic in close confinement.
6. Once your dog is crate trained, you have a valuable behavior management tool for life. ***Respect it.*** If you abuse it by keeping him confined too much, or for too long a period of time, or by using it as punishment, he may learn to dislike it. Even though he goes to bed willingly and on cue, reward Fido often enough to keep the response happy and quick. Keep your verbal ***“Go to bed”*** cue light and happy. *Don't ever let anyone tease or punish him in his crate.*
  - a. Children can be especially obnoxious about this. Watch them!