

Crate Training

A Guide Covering the Basics of Crate Training and Maintenance

What Does Crate Trained Mean?

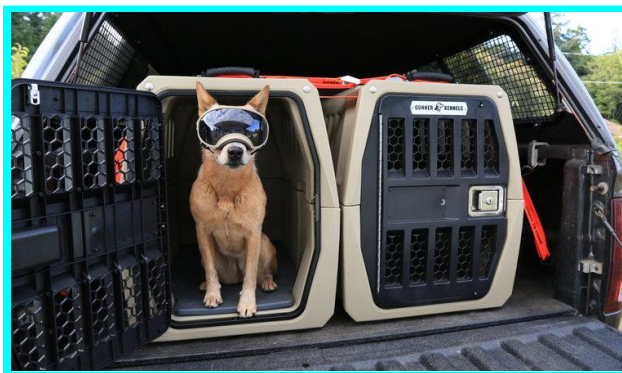
In order to crate train your dog, you need to know what a fully crate trained dog looks like. The way I measure this is by determining if a dog willingly goes into a crate/kennel and calmly exists in it without discomfort or stress (which often presents in actions like barking, drooling, scratching the door, or whining). However, it's important to take into consideration that these parameters are only fair if all of the dogs' needs have been met. This means that your pet has been fed, pottied, exercised, etc. Personally, I recommend no more than 4 consecutive hours in the kennel during the day (if your work schedule allows) and 8-10 at night.

The Basics

The main goal when you crate train your dog is to build a positive association between your dog and the crate. Begin by always keeping the crate door open and available to them when they are loose in the house. Make sure you always keep fun and comfortable items in their crate, such as toys and bedding. Throwing in treats every once in a while, or while they're in there with the door open can also be useful. I also make sure to feed my dogs while they are in their kennel so they have that positive experience in it as well. Lastly, begin by only keeping them in the kennel for short periods of time at first, and slowly increase that as they become more tolerant.

Kennel Travel Safety

It's important to remember that there is always a possibility of getting in a car accident while traveling. Unfortunately, when a dog is in a car during an accident there is a high chance of them being injured flying around the car or even being ejected and lost. Our dogs are part of our family, and as so, we want to do the best we can to keep them safe when on the move. One of the best ways you can avoid this is by using a kennel during transportation. Muddy Paws recommends the five star rated, crash tested Gunner Kennels. However, a more cost effective but safe option is the Ruffland Kennels rather than a common Petco or wire kennel. Additionally, a kennel is even more safe if you are able to tie it down in your vehicle.



Reasons to Crate Train

As much as we would all love to be able to bring our dogs everywhere with us, it's just not reality. Life gets busy, we work, run errands, go on day trips with friends, etc. Having a crate trained dog makes all of this much less stressful, because you know your dog is safe and staying out of trouble while you're away.

1. Makes Potty Training Easier

- a. Taking away the ability for your puppy to potty in a corner while you're away from home really helps limit the messes you'll have to clean when you get back. Dogs also have a natural aversion to soiling their sleeping space, so as long as you make sure they're being pottied enough, you should be able to almost entirely eliminate accidents pretty quickly.

2. Reduce Negative Behaviors

- a. Many dogs have a tendency to get bored or anxious when they are home alone. They take these feelings out in actions like chewing/scratching furniture, pottying in the house, or ingesting items they shouldn't.

3. Safety

- a. Leaving your dog home alone can be scary. Keeping them in a crate can reduce the chances of them ingesting anything they shouldn't while you're gone. This prevents dangerous blockages from objects or poisoning from household chemicals.

4. Learning to Be Calm

- a. Puppies and other high energy dogs often struggle to settle down at home, even after they have had a reasonable amount of exercise. Being able to put them in their safe place for a while can really help calm them down so you can get cooking, cleaning, work, etc. done without a maniac running around.

5. Vet, Boarding, Grooming, Etc.

- a. Making sure that your dog is comfortable in a kennel is really important in case there is a time they need to stay overnight at a vet, board while you're away, or go in to get groomed. Each of these facilities generally uses kennels as a way to keep dogs separate and safe while they are waiting. You want to know that they won't be panicking the whole time they are at these facilities.

6. Dogs are Den Animals

- a. Dog's are naturally den animals, as they did evolve from wolves. A dog who truly loves their kennel uses it as a way to escape overstimulation or to decompress after being around a lot of other dogs, people, or even kids. When a dog feels that they don't have this safe place to rest or escape, they tend to get grumpy or even frustrated enough to snap in ways that they usually wouldn't.

Common Questions

➤ When Should I begin crate training?

If you are bringing home a puppy, you should begin their crate training immediately. They are already going through a lot of change at that point, so it's getting used to it's permanent structure and routine right away. Puppies thrive in this stability and are just like human babies when it comes to soaking up new information and routines like a sponge.

The same can be said when you adopt an adult dog. You may encounter more reluctance, but it's important to keep your patience, it is often much more difficult for adult dogs to adjust.

➤ What does appropriate crate behavior look like?

A well trained dog will quietly lay down and take a nap, or chew on/play with a toy peacefully.

➤ What Should I Put in my Dog's Crate?

Make sure to keep easily destroyed or ingestible toys out of your dog's crate, and replace them with safer, self entertaining toys like antlers, nylabones, and Kongs. Along the same wavelength, make sure to pay attention to the bedding you're putting in your crate. Some dogs are able to have beds with cotton filling, but for others you may want to stick to more simple blankets they are going to be less inclined to rip apart.