



Crate training a puppy or adult dog takes a little bit of time but can be useful in many situations including toilet training a puppy, providing a safe place for your dog when other events are happening in the home, a place to leave your dog at Shows or Trials, during car/plane travel and during a stay at the veterinary hospital. A puppy may have already been introduced to crates/trolleys by their breeder as a place to rest in their puppy enclosure. If you observe your puppy you will notice that they often choose to rest in a corner or between objects as they generally feel more relaxed in these situations where they are less likely to get “ambushed” from behind. A crate provides similar barriers for them to feel safe.

*It is important to NEVER use the crate as a punishment*

## Safety First

Make sure the crate is appropriate for your puppy/dog – if your puppy chews everything a soft crate is probably not going to survive and a metal crate will be more secure. The crate needs to be large enough for the dog to stand up, turn around and lie down stretched out but should not be big enough to allow a puppy you are trying to toilet train be able to move away and toilet in a back corner. Bedding should be comfortable but chew proof. Make sure there is no collar or a flat collar on your dog with no tags/attachments that could get caught in a crate. If you are using a metal crate with a puppy or small breed dog you may need to cover the entry with a mat or cut pool noodle to prevent the puppy getting his toes caught in the wire under the entry door. We don't want to risk the crate being associated with a bad experience so preparation is key.



## Steps In Crate Training

The first step in crate training is to make the crate a comfortable, secure place where good things happen. Place the crate in a quiet corner of a room you spend a lot of time in within your house so there are minimal distractions during your training but your puppy can be close to you when learning to use the crate. Secure the crate door open so it cannot accidentally close or bang and scare your puppy. Giving your puppy treats, their favourite toys/bedding and meals in the crate starts to make the crate a place that the puppy wants to go to. You may have to start by putting the treats just outside the crate and then slowly putting them just inside the crate and then further back as your puppy becomes comfortable with going into the crate. Work in several short sessions daily – just a few minutes at a time and don't force your puppy into the crate.

When your puppy is comfortable going into the crate you can start to briefly close the crate door for a few seconds while he is playing with his toy/dog chew or eating his meal. If he seems happy with the door closed you can slowly increase the amount of time the door is shut but initially stay next to the crate so you can monitor him. Once he is comfortable being confined with you close to him you can start to spend very short periods of time out of the room (start with just a few seconds). Slowly increase the amount of time he is in the crate and you are away from him so you will eventually be able to leave him at home crated for short periods while you are out or at night while you sleep. Provide him with a hanging water bowl or spill proof bowl if he is left in the crate for a longer period of time.



## Crate Games

You can also play games with the crate to increase its value – encourage the puppy to run into his crate to get a treat or a toy you throw in there from a distance. Once he has mastered this the next step would be to reward him for staying in the crate rather than running straight back out again. If he comes out just wait until he chooses to go back into the crate and then praise and reward him. This game can also help to train him not to rush out past you as soon as you open the door of the crate.

*More crate games ideas can be found by searching Susan Garrett and crate games on YouTube.*

## Puppy Toilet Training

If you are using a crate for toilet training make sure you don't leave your puppy in there too long so he is left with no choice but to toilet in his crate. Take him straight from the crate to an area where he can toilet after he has eaten his meal or wakes up from a sleep. Try to avoid bringing him straight back into his crate after he has toileted – spend a little time playing or walking with him so he doesn't associate toileting with immediately being confined/left alone.

Do not punish a puppy for making a mistake. Telling him off when you find urine or faeces in his crate will make him less likely to want to go into his crate next time. Calmly take him to the area you want him to toilet and praise him when he goes in the correct place. Puppies do not have full control of their bladder and bowels until 4-6 months of age and even then will often have trouble holding on for long periods and may still need to be taken out regularly.

*For further details on Toilet Training have a look at the [Toilet Training Your Puppy Fact Sheet](#)*

Take your time with crate training - one step at a time - and if your puppy/dog seems uncomfortable go back to the last step where he enjoyed being in the crate and go forward more slowly and with higher value rewards. A crated puppy is safer as he does not have access to dangerous items when unsupervised. A crate trained dog will be happy to go there and relax when there are challenging situations that he may not be comfortable with such as storms or fireworks outside especially if the crate is covered. A crate is not a solution for everything but having a crate trained dog is valuable in many situations during their life and means you can take your dog to some places he may not otherwise be able to go if he could not be contained safely.

*Refer to our [Scary Noises - Thunderstorms and Fireworks Fact Sheet](#) for more information on preparing for these events.*

