

# Crate Training

Crate training is one of the most useful skills you can teach a puppy. When done correctly, the crate can become a safe, quiet place where your puppy can relax and stay out of trouble.

Here is a step-by-step guide to doing it right.

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## 1. Preparation: The Setup

- **The Right Size:** The crate should be just big enough for your puppy to stand up, turn around, and lie down comfortably. If it's too large, they may use one corner as a bathroom. (Tip: Buy an adult-sized crate with a **divider panel** to grow with them).
- **Location:** Place the crate in a "social but quiet" area, like a corner of the living room. Puppies are social animals and want to be near you, even if they are resting.
- **Make it Cozy:** Add a soft crate pad or blanket (unless your puppy is a "shredder") and consider covering the top and sides with a light sheet to create a darker, more restful environment.

## 2. Step-by-Step Introduction

**Goal:** Your puppy should *choose* to go in because good things happen there.

- **Step 1: The Treat Trail:** Drop high-value treats (chicken, cheese, or their favorite puppy snack) leading up to and inside the crate. Let them go in and out freely with the door propped open. Do not force them.
- **Step 2: Meal Time:** Start feeding your puppy their regular meals inside the crate. First, put the bowl near the door. Gradually move it to the very back over several days.
- **Step 3: Closing the Door:** While they are eating, quietly close the door. Open it the *second* they finish. Gradually increase the time the door stays closed after they finish eating—from 30 seconds to 5 minutes.
- **Step 4: The "Jackpot" Chew.** Give them a special long-lasting chew (like a frozen Kong or a bully stick) that they **only get inside the crate**. Close the door while they enjoy it and stay in the room with them.

## 3. Building Duration & Distance

Once your puppy is comfortable being in the crate for 10–15 minutes while you are in the room, do the following:

1. **Short Departures:** Have your puppy go into the crate with a chew, close the door, and step out of the room for 2 minutes. Return quietly and let them out only when they are calm.
  2. **Vary the Time:** Practice crating them for different lengths of time (5 mins, 20 mins, 2 mins) so they don't associate the crate only with long absences.
  3. **Real Use:** Start using the crate for "Enforced Naps." Puppies are like toddlers—they get cranky and "bitey" when overtired. A scheduled nap in the crate every few hours is a great way to make sure your puppy is getting an appropriate amount of rest.
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#### 4. How Long is Too Long?

Puppies can generally hold their pee for 1 hour for every month of age, plus one, with a maximum of about 4-6 hours until they are 6 months old.

- **8-10 weeks:** 1 hour max
- **10-12 weeks:** 2 hours max
- **3-6 months:** 3-4 hours max
- **Overnight:** Puppies can usually hold it longer while sleeping, but you should still expect 1-2 potty breaks at night for very young pups.

#### 5. What NOT to do!

- **Using the crate for punishment:** Do not use the crate as a "time out" when you are upset or your puppy is frustrated as they may learn to fear the crate.
- **Forcing into the crate:** Do not drag or push your puppy into the crate, which causes distress.
- **Leaving collars on:** For safety, always remove your puppy's collar or harness before crating to prevent it from getting snagged on the crate.