

# Crate Training: The "Safe Haven" Approach

Crate training is one of the most valuable skills you can teach your dog. When done correctly, a crate becomes a quiet, safe place where your dog can relax, nap, and feel secure.

## Why Use a Crate?

- **Safety & Management:** It prevents destructive chewing and house-soiling when you can't supervise.
- **Safe Travel:** A crate provides a secure way to transport your dog in the car.
- **Anxiety Management:** It offers a retreat from a busy household or loud events like thunderstorms.

## Step 1: Making the Crate Inviting

- **Location:** Place the crate in a social area (like the living room) so the dog doesn't feel isolated.
- **The "Treat Trail":** Prop the door securely open and toss high-value treats (chicken, cheese, or their favorite snack) near the crate, then inside. Let your dog explore at their own pace—**never force them in**. Do not close the door to the crate at this point.
- **The Jackpot:** Give them long-lasting chews (like a frozen Kong) that they only get inside the crate.

## Step 2: Meal Time Association

- Start feeding regular meals near the crate. Gradually move the bowl further inside until they are eating comfortably in the crate.
- **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 by a few seconds each day.

## Step 3: Building Duration

- **The 20-Minute Rule:** Once they are comfortable, aim for short crate sessions (5–20 minutes) while you are in the room.

- **Short Departures:** Step out of the room for 30 seconds to 2 minutes, then return quietly and let them out of the crate. Gradually add on more time as they are comfortable.

## What NOT to Do

- **Never use the crate as punishment:** If your dog associates the crate with your anger or when they are feeling frustrated, it will no longer be a "safe" space.
- **Don't ignore distress:** If your dog is frantic, panting, or pawing aggressively, they may have **confinement anxiety**, which requires professional help rather than more crate time.
- **Limit Crate Time:** Adult dogs should not be crated for more than 6 hours at one time. Enlist the help of friends, family, or a dog walker if you are not able to take your dog out throughout the day.