



FREE GUIDE

Crate training made easy

A step-by-step introduction plan

Introduction

Done right, a crate becomes your dog's own space — somewhere they choose to nap, not somewhere they're forced into. Done too fast, it becomes a source of stress. This guide walks through a gradual introduction plan and what to do if your dog is crying or resisting.

Why the crate should mean "good things"

The crate needs to be associated with comfort before it's ever associated with being left alone or closed in. That means the first several sessions involve no closed door at all — just building a positive history with the space itself.

The step-by-step introduction plan

- Step 1: Leave the door open and toss treats inside, letting your dog enter and exit freely, with zero pressure.
- Step 2: Start feeding meals inside the open crate so it becomes linked to something they already enjoy.
- Step 3: Close the door for a few seconds during a meal or a stuffed food toy, then open it before any distress.
- Step 4: Gradually extend closed-door time while you're in the room, working up over several days, not one sitting.
- Step 5: Practice closed-door time while you leave the room briefly, then build toward your dog being comfortable while you leave the house.

Making it comfortable

Size matters: your dog should be able to stand, turn around, and lie down fully stretched out, but a crate that's too large can undermine the cozy, den-like feeling that makes it appealing. A blanket, a piece of your worn clothing, and a safe chew all help make the space feel like theirs rather than a box.

Troubleshooting crying and whining

Some vocalizing during the first few sessions is normal. The key distinction is escalating panic (scratching at the door, non-stop barking, drooling) versus mild protest that fades within a minute or two. If it's the former, you've moved too fast — go back to the previous step and stay there longer before trying to progress again.

Crate setup checklist

- ☐ A crate sized so your dog can stand, turn, and stretch out fully
- ☐ Soft bedding and one item that smells familiar

- ☐ A long-lasting chew or food puzzle reserved just for crate time
- ☐ A predictable spot for the crate, away from constant foot traffic
- ☐ A plan to introduce closed-door time gradually, in small steps

Summary

A crate introduced slowly, with genuinely good associations built first, tends to become one of a dog's favorite spots in the house. Rushing the closed-door step is the single most common reason crate training goes wrong.

This guide is for general education only and is not a substitute for advice from a certified trainer, veterinarian, or veterinary behaviorist. If you're seeing signs of distress, aggression, or a sudden change in behavior, please consult a professional who can assess your pet directly.