How to Crate Train Your Dog in Nine Easy Steps

Shannon Sharpe

We all want a well-behaved dog that doesn't tear things up and goes to the bathroom outside — and dog crate training is an important part of that. A crate creates a safe environment for your dog and a space that belongs to them.

While many people view crates through the human lens of being "caged up," dogs are naturally den animals and most enjoy being in small, enclosed places. A crate provides them with a feeling of security, and when trained to use them from an early age, crates can help calm anxiety.

We talked to Anna Flayton, senior dog trainer for PUPS Pet Club in Chicago, for her advice on how to crate train your dog.

In Partnership with

*Dog friendly rental filter applied to results

Step 1: Choose the Right Crate for Your Dog

Finding the <u>best crate for your dog</u> is key.

"You want to get one that's durable, comfortable, and flexible with whatever training you're doing," says Flayton. For dogs that prefer to sleep in the dark, she recommends kennel or airline-style dog crates (which are more enclosed), while wire dog crates work best for other dogs. It's important, she notes, that you don't buy a crate that is too big for your dog. "Depending on how big your dog is going to get, buy the right crate for their adult size," she advises. "Then get a divider so you can build the space and grant them more and more space."

AKC is a participant in affiliate advertising programs designed to provide a means for sites to earn advertising fees by advertising and linking to akc.org. If you purchase a product through this article, we may receive a portion of the sale.

Step 2: Establish the Proper Mindset for Crate Training

"The more the dogs associate the crate with a relaxed mindset, the more they'll ultimately enjoy hanging out in there," says Flayton. If you put the dog in the crate when they're playing, then they'll want to come back out and continue to play. But if you bring them in it when they're calm, they will likely view it as a place of rest. Start by bringing them in for 10 minutes at a time and work your way up from there.

Step 3: Decide How Your Dog Will Be Comfortable in Their Crate

Some people use <u>dog beds</u> or towels to create a comfy environment, but that may not always be the best option. Once again, it's trial and error. "Depending on the dog you have, they may tear a dog bed apart or they may use it to pee on," she warns. "It's not a bad thing for them to just sleep on the crate mat itself. Dogs actually do prefer hard surfaces."

AKC is a participant in affiliate advertising programs designed to provide a means for sites to earn advertising fees by advertising and linking to akc.org. If you purchase a product through this article, we may receive a portion of the sale.

Step 4: Reward the Dog After They Go Into the Crate

Once again, positive association rules. One of Flayton's favorite tricks is giving the dog a <u>KONG toy</u> filled with peanut butter that she's put in the freezer. "When they're hanging out in the crate, they have something that stimulates them, but they have to work down the frozen peanut butter," she says. It gets the dog used to being in the crate for a longer period of time, while also associating it with an enjoyable activity.

Step 5: Keep an Eye on the Time Spent in the Crate

Your dog needs time outside the crate to play, eat, and use the bathroom. Dogs don't want to soil where they sleep, but if there's too long of a stretch without a walk, they might end up doing so.

Step 6: Play Crate Games With Your Dog

The dog shouldn't see the crate as a negative place. To ensure this, incorporate the crate into fun games where the pup goes in and out of the open crate at their own will. Flayton likes to throw the ball in the crate when playing fetch or hide treats inside for the dog to find.

AKC is a participant in affiliate advertising programs designed to provide a means for sites to earn advertising fees by advertising and linking to akc.org. If you purchase a product through this article, we may receive a portion of the sale.

Step 7: Keep Your Dog "Naked" in the Crate

"Dogs should never, ever have <u>dog collars</u> or tags or anything on when they're in the crate," warns Flayton. If the tag gets caught in the crate the dog could strangle.

Step 8: Set Your Dog Up for Crate-Training Success

Once you are ready to give your dog more time inside the crate, do it in small steps. "You don't want to go out to dinner for six hours," cautions Flayton. "Maybe just go get a cup of coffee and come back." She also advises using a remote dog camera device to determine what your dog does while you're gone. "Are they anxious? Are they pacing? Or are they calm?" she says. "Then you know — and when you come back, you can reward them."

Step 9: Be Patient With Crate Training

Prepare yourself for at least six months of crate training. There will be ups and downs since dogs aren't linear learners, but success will come, says Flayton. "Even when it feels like you're banging your head against a wall, as long as you stay calm and consistent in your methodology, your dog will eventually look for the reward and you'll have the opportunity to reward them."

AKC is a participant in affiliate advertising programs designed to provide a means for sites to earn advertising fees by advertising and linking to akc.org. If you purchase a product through this article, we may receive a portion of the sale.

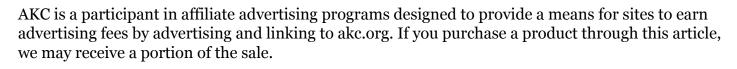
Selecting the Best Dog Crate

For almost any dog — Wire Dog Crate

AKC is a participant in affiliate advertising programs designed to provide a means for sites to earn advertising fees by advertising and linking to akc.org. If you purchase a product through this article, we may receive a portion of the sale.

Get in-depth reviews of the <u>best wire dog crates</u> for your dog.

For the Dog who loves a little privacy — Plastic Dog Crate



Get in-depth reviews of the best plastic dog crates for your dog.

For a travel-loving dog — <u>Soft Dog Crate</u>

AKC is a participant in affiliate advertising programs designed to provide a means for sites to earn advertising fees by advertising and linking to akc.org. If you purchase a product through this article, we may receive a portion of the sale.

Get in-depth reviews of the <u>best soft-side dog crates</u> for your dog.

At <u>AKC Marketplace</u>, we can help you find your dream dog. You can find AKC-registerable puppies from responsible, passionate breeders, and we provide the tools you need for every step of the process. Visit <u>marketplace.akc.org</u> to start connecting with dog breeders in your area!