

Crate training your dog or puppy

What to know before starting crate training

Crate training doesn't happen overnight, and introducing your dog to a crate should take place over a long period of time (several weeks or more).

Young dogs can only be expected to control their bladder and bowels for a few hours, not an entire work day or overnight. A dog who is forced to soil her crate as a result of being crated too long will be much more difficult to housetrain.

While you're introducing your dog to her crate, use another space to safely house her for extended periods of time when you're unavailable, such as during the work day or at night.

Create a dog-safe environment like a small bathroom, kitchen, gated-off area of a room, or an exercise pen (a small, freestanding pen) containing the dog's crate (with door removed), water, toys, and potty area. The potty area can consist of newspaper, pee pads or even a square of sod in a cat litter box. This allows your dog to sleep in her crate but potty on an approved, easy-to-clean surface.

Use this space to house your dog anytime you leave your dog for longer than she can hold her bowels and bladder. **Use your puppy's age in months plus one to determine the number of hours he can be crated.**

How do I crate train my dog?

How do I manage whining?

If your dog whines or cries while in the crate at night, it may be difficult to decide whether she is whining to be let out of the crate, or if she needs to be let outside to eliminate.

Initially you can ignore the whining. Your dog may stop if she is just testing to see if she'll be let out. If the whining continues after you have ignored it for several minutes, you can repeat the phrase your dog has associated with going outside to eliminate. If she responds and becomes excited, take her outside. This should be a trip with a purpose, not play time.

If you are convinced that your dog does not need to eliminate, the best response is to ignore the whining completely. Most attempts at punishing the behavior actually end up inadvertently reinforcing it because the dog is getting attention from you.

During the process of ignoring whining, expect it to get worse before it gets better. If the problem becomes unmanageable, you may need to restart the crate training process from the very beginning.

What to avoid when crate training your dog

- **Don't rush crate training.** While it may be frustrating to go slow, you want to be sure to make the crate a place your dog is happy to use.

- **Don't yell at her or pound on the crate if she is whining**, because this will likely make it worse.
- **Don't give in when the whining or behavior gets worse!** Your dog is throwing a temper tantrum which you don't want to reinforce by giving her what she wants.
- **Don't use the crate as a punishment for bad behavior.** Again, you want to associate the crate with only good things so your dog is happy to use the crate.