

How to Get Your Dog to Love His Crate

Crates offer many benefits for canines, and if introduced properly can be a comforting refuge for your dog. Choosing the right type, size and location are paramount to your dog's acceptance. Avoid these mistakes to help your pet respond positively to his new cozy den.

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STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Dog crates are useful for keeping your pet safe while you're away from the house, while houstraining your pup and also during travel by car or at pet-friendly hotels
- Some dog owners also find that their pets enjoy sleeping in their crates overnight, especially with a cozy cover to keep out noise and light
- Be sure to get the right sized crate, taking into account your pet's size, age and houstraining status
- Choose a mat that's thick enough to provide comfort but not so thick that it impedes your dog's movement
- Your dog's crate should be in a spot that's temperature-controlled, quiet and calm; avoid placing the crate in direct sunlight, too close to a heat source or in a cold, drafty area of your home

Dog crates are useful for keeping your pet safe while you're away from the house, while houstraining your pup and also during travel by car or at pet-friendly hotels. Some dog owners also find that their pets enjoy sleeping in their crates overnight, especially with a cozy cover to keep out noise and light. However, the key to making the crate a space your dog wants to go lies in creating a comfortable and safe abode — here's how.

Tips to Make Your Dog's Crate Comforting

Proper introduction to the crate is critical. So before you begin, watch the video above for tips on how to properly get your dog used to their crate. Once your dog is open to spending time there, it's time to properly outfit it for success. For starters, be sure to get the right sized crate. For house-trained dogs, choose a crate that's big enough for him to sleep and move around in, as well as chew on a toy or two.

Older animals may enjoy a larger crate where they have more space to get comfortable, while dogs that aren't houstrained may need a smaller crate until they learn to go to the bathroom outdoors. "Most dogs do not like to sleep in a soiled area, which is why the area should be small," Kelly Armour, a certified trainer and behavior analysis specialist, told PetMD.¹

Once you've chosen the proper crate, think about its material. If your dog is generally calm in their crate, consider a soft-sided variety for comfort. Dogs that are avid chewers could easily chew through a cloth-sided crate, however. You'll want to choose a mat for the bottom as well, again taking your dog's propensity for chewing into account.

Be sure the mat is thick enough to provide comfort but not so thick that it impedes your dog's movement. You can also supply blankets, if your dog enjoys snuggling in them, along with puzzle toys or treat toys to keep your dog mentally occupied.

Choose Where to Keep Your Dog's Crate Carefully

Your dog's crate should be in a spot that's temperature-controlled, quiet and calm. Avoid placing the crate in direct sunlight, too close to a heat source or in a cold, drafty area of your home. During the summer, your doggy may enjoy a fan blowing on the crate, especially if he has a longer coat, but be sure it's positioned so he can move away from the air if he chooses. As Armour told PetMD:²

"For warmer months, or if you have a heavy-coated animal, a crate fan is an excellent option. You want to carefully attach or position a fan to a crate so that it provides good ventilation but is not blowing directly on the animal in a way that he cannot move away if he feels too cool or uncomfortable."

At night, you may want to use a cover for the crate, but keep in mind it will make it warmer inside. Ensure that your dog has adequate ventilation, and access to water, at all times while in the crate. I like to drape a blanket over the back half of my dogs' crates to create a quiet, dark, den-like atmosphere where my dogs like to sleep.

It's also a good idea to remove your dog's collar and harness, which could get caught on the crate and pose a choking hazard, before they go inside — especially if your dog is still a rambunctious puppy.

Make sure there's nothing hanging inside the crate that could cause your dog harm, and disinfect it with mild soap or vinegar and baking soda regularly. Be sure to rinse and dry it thoroughly once it's clean.

Tips if Your Dog Is Resistant to the Crate

If your dog isn't too keen on the idea of a crate, introduce him to it gradually. Don't ever force your dog into or out of the crate, as you can end up with an unmanageable case of crate fear or a pathological aversion to enclosed or small spaces. Instead, put all of his favorite things — treat-release toys, chew toys, food puzzle toys, treats, a favorite blanket — in the crate. Then leave the door propped open so he can freely come and go.

You can also feed your pup in his crate to get him used to the idea that it's a positive place to be. Once your dog begins associating good things with the crate and he's feeling more comfortable there, you can close the door for short, and eventually longer, periods.

Unless your dog chews everything, always leave something fun inside for your dog to focus on, and don't leave your house until your dog is completely comfortable in the closed crate while you're at home. You can gradually extend the amount of time you **leave him in the crate**, providing he's getting consistent, frequent trips outside to potty.

With the proper introduction and soft, cozy surroundings, most dogs look at their crates as their den — a space where they can go to relax, be safe and sleep. If you've tried all of these tips and your dog still refuses to spend time in a crate, I recommend talking with a **positive dog trainer** who can help you work through any underlying issues.

Sources and References

