

## **Crate Training**

Living with us humans can sometimes be chaotic for our Canine Companions. One of the main goals associated with crate training is to create a “safe space” for our dogs to rest, escape chaos, and overall feel comfortable in our homes. In order to create this positive association with the crate, it is important that we introduce our dogs to the crate in a slow, fun, and positive manner. Here are some tips to get the ball rolling on crate training:

- Always make the crate a FUN and COMFORTABLE place to be, so that means no “time outs” or punishments should be associated with the crate.
- When first introducing the crate, leave the crate door open and allow them to investigate freely without worry of being locked in.
- Allow your dog to inspect their new crate, and reward them for their interest with high value goodies.
- Toss treats into the back of the crate, and then when they enter the crate continue dropping treats into the crate to reinforce them staying in the crate.
- Feed meals in the crate (with the door open at first) to build high value for the crate.
- Once your dog eagerly approaches the crate, reinforce them for entering and then close the door for a brief moment while popping treats into the crate.





- When your dog will enter the crate on his own and will stay in the crate anticipating reinforcement, you can start working on duration!
- Stock up on chewies, bully sticks, pig's ears, or fill some Kongs with high value goodies. Ask your dog to enter the crate, give them something high value that will take a while to eat through and close the door.
- You can also move the crate by the couch where the family hangs out and have him stay in the crate while you occasionally drop goodies in during TV time.
- Continue playing fun crate games with your dog so that he doesn't start associating the crate with being locked up for long durations. We want to maintain the positive association!

Having a dog with strong positive associations to the crate can be beneficial in so many ways. A few are listed below:

- It is one of the easiest ways to maintain a potty-training plan
  - It can prevent your dog from doing something undesirable like chewing on "inappropriate" household items
  - A crate will provide your dog with a special den-like place of his own
  - Crates are a great place for your dog to hang out when you have visitors over
  - When traveling, having a crate may prevent added travel stress as it is a familiar comfortable place for them
  - They are a great way to manage multiple dogs during feeding time and prevent unnecessary altercations between housemates
- Crate training should be a positive experience for your dog, so don't forget to HAVE FUN!