



The Mannerly Dog

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Training Tip Sheet: Crate-training Your Dog

Reasons for Training Your Dog to Relax in a Crate or Kennel:

- Boarding, staying at the veterinary hospital when needed
- Trips – staying in a hotel, at a relative’s home, or evacuating for a hurricane
- Somewhere to put your dog when repair people are in your home
- A place for your dog to rest when she needs a break from visitors
- A place for your dog to stay when you’re away from the house

Tips for Associating the Crate or Kennel with Good Things:

- Position the crate so it’s always accessible to your dog.
- Provide bedding so the crate is comfortable; you want the dog to relax.
- Play a Crate Game with your new dog: Sit quietly in front of the crate with some treats. When the dog looks toward the door of the crate, say, “Yes!” (as he’s looking at it) and give him a treat. Do this as many times as he looks at the kennel. If he takes a step toward the kennel, say, “Yes!” and give him a treat. If he goes into the kennel, say, “Yes!” and give him a treat inside. Do not trick him by closing the door and leaving him; that’s not the point of the game. We are conditioning him to happily go in the crate on his own by rewarding any effort. He is always free to come right back out of the crate if he wants to. Play this game often and don’t rush it; combined with the other tips here, it will help you get your new dog used to the crate quickly.
- When the dog goes in the crate on her own to rest, quietly pet her with long, slow strokes while she continues to rest.
- Feed your dog every meal in his crate.
- Keep the dog’s water bucket in his crate. Attach it to the side of the crate so he can’t spill it; every drink of water will require a trip partially into the crate.
- Prepare a stuffed Kong with some special food that you give your dog only when you leave her in her crate; take it away as soon as you let her out. (See The Mannerly Dog’s Tip Sheet on [preparing stuffed Kongs!](#))
- Practice leaving the dog in the crate for a few minutes at a time while you’re home. Put him in, give him the special stuffed Kong, and walk away without much drama or fanfare. Return to get him out in a few minutes: open the door when the dog is quiet for a few seconds, not when he’s barking and jumping up. Let him out, pick up the Kong and greet him quietly, again without much drama or fanfare. After a few minutes, play with him or do some other training exercises.
- Sometimes, when you’re sure the dog is ready for a nap, put him in the crate for an hour or more while you’re home. Follow the same procedure outlined above.
- When you need to leave the house, again follow the same routine, Kong and all.
- Wait for your dog to be calm and quiet, if only for 5 seconds at first, before opening the door of the crate to let him out. Never let him out while he’s barking or jumping around in the crate; reward his efforts to calm himself, even when he’s excited to see you. Once you let him out, call him to you for affection or playtime as usual.