



# HUMANE SOCIETY

of sonoma county

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## CRATE TRAINING



The crate is an indoor doghouse – large enough for a dog to stand up, lie down, and turn around in – made of plastic, wire fabric or heavy-duty aluminum. Crates can be used as a way to contain your dog in a variety of situations and environments. Using a crate in a vehicle is a terrific strategy to keep your dog safe while on the road. For people involved in dog sports, a crate is a tool to contain the dog in busy venues. The crate is NEVER used as punishment.

**There are several methods for teaching your dog to love the crate.**

**To start off:** Place the crate in a commonly used area of the household, such as a living room or kitchen. For young puppies, the crate can be placed in a bedroom to help with overnight house training. Reward your dog every time they get near the crate or show interest in it in any way. The crate should always be paired with something the dog likes. Take your time!!

**Crates mean treats:** Leave the crate door wide open and make sure your dog has access to the room where you've set up the crate. Every so often, when he's not looking, toss a few treats around and into the crate so he can discover them on his own. Use something that your dog will love, like small pieces of chicken, cheese, hot dog or freeze-dried liver. You can also leave an exciting new toy, a delicious chew bone or a stuffed KONG® toy inside the crate. Periodically leave special treats in your dog's crate throughout the evening, and continue to do so every day or so for the next few weeks. If your dog sometimes finds surprise goodies in his crate, he'll start to love it, and he'll probably go into it often just to see if the "Treat Fairy" has come. Another trick is to rub peanut butter or cream cheese on the back panel of the crate.

**Room Service:** You can start feeding your dog in his crate with the door open. If he's afraid of that, place the food dish outside the crate and move it slowly inside the crate over a period of several meals. Once your dog is comfortable with the idea of being in the crate while eating, close the door briefly. When he's finished with the meal, open the door to let your dog out.

**Shaping the crate:** Shaping is another way to reinforce closer approximations toward the final goal behavior. In this case, the goal is your dog comfortably going in and building duration in the crate. It's important to keep track of the correct approximations so the behavior can evolve to the final target behavior.

Step One: You could first reward the dog for approaching the crate. Mark (or click) and reward the dog outside the crate.

Step Two: Putting one foot in the crate. Mark AS THE FOOT IS GOING IN THE CRATE.

Contact: [dogtraining@humanesocietysoco.org](mailto:dogtraining@humanesocietysoco.org)

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Step Three: You could then reward him for getting halfway into the crate.

Step Four: You could wait for him to get all the way in the crate before giving him the reward.

Finally, you could reward him when he gets all the way in the crate and then lies down. A trainer would say that the dog has been “shaped” to get into the crate.

Building duration in the crate is equally a progressive effort. It may take one second or five second increments then slowly build longer duration.

NEVER let your dog simply “cry it out.” That emotion can become attached to the behavior of being in the crate. Your dog should be allowed to enter and exit the crate with ease.

**Follow the Treat: Luring into the Crate-remember to do this in small steps** You can do the following exercises sitting on the floor or in a chair right next to the crate. Step One: Give a cue to ask your dog to go into the crate, such as “kennel.” Show your dog one of the treats and toss it in the crate.

Step Two: After he goes inside to eat it, praise him enthusiastically and feed him another treat while he’s still inside.

Step Three: Release your dog from the crate with another cue like “Release” or “Let’s go.”

Step Four: Repeat the steps above 10 times.

Step Five: Take a short break (just a few minutes), and then do another set of 10 repetitions. After your second set, end the training session.

To warm up, do a couple repetitions just like you did before in Step One – throwing the treat into the crate so that your dog follows it. Then you can shape another part of the behavior which to have going in the crate not be the result of luring.

Step One: Give your cue, “kennel,” and point to the crate instead of throwing a treat into it. When you point, it might help to move your arm like you did when tossing a treat into the crate. The familiar motion can remind your dog. The arm motion becomes a visual signal.

Step Two: When your dog goes in, praise and immediately give a couple of treats while he’s still in the crate. Release your dog from the crate.

Step Three: Repeat the steps above several times.

Close the crate door

To warm up, do a couple repetitions just like you did before in

Step Two. Say “kennel,” point to the crate, reward your dog with a treat when he goes in and then cue him to come out. Now you’ll try closing the crate door for just a moment.

1. Give your cue “kennel” and point to the crate.
2. When your dog goes in the crate, praise him and immediately give a treat.
3. Then gently close the crate door. (You don’t have to latch it yet.)
4. Feed your dog two or three treats through the closed crate door and continue to praise him while he’s in the crate.
5. Say “release” and open the crate door to let your dog out. (If your dog seems stressed or panicked with the door briefly closed, break down this exercise into two phases: in the first phase, just close the door halfway, give a treat and release your dog; in the second phase, close the door all the way.)
6. Repeat steps above 10 times if the dog is enjoying the game.

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