

Acclimating an Adult Dog to a Crate

Place the crate in the room where the family spends most of the time.

Put a comfy bed or blanket inside.

Either take the door off or fasten it open so it doesn't accidentally swing closed in the early stages of the training.

If your crate is a wire-mesh type - cover the top, back and sides with a sheet so that it is more like a cave than a cage.

STEP 1

Several times a day - surreptitiously place VERY yummy treats (chunks of meat or cheese) inside the crate for your dog to find on his/her own. At first place them just inside the door and as things progress place them farther and farther back.

STEP 2 - Play the 'Crate Game'

DAY 1

1. Toss a treat near the crate opening (right outside).
2. Praise your dog when she moves towards the crate to get the treat.
3. Do this 3-4 times and then end the session.
4. Do 3-4 sessions during this first day.

DAY 2

1. Toss the treat as in previous session a few times (just outside the crate).
2. Toss a treat just INSIDE the door of the crate.
3. Praise your dog when she sticks her head inside to get the treat.
4. Do this 3-4 times and then end the session.
5. Do 3-4 sessions during this second day.

DAY 3

1. Toss a treat a few inches farther back in the crate than yesterday and repeat the sessions as above.

DAY 4 and then as many days as needed

Continue like this until you can toss the treat all the way to the back of the crate and your dog will go all the way in to get it.

Once she is going all the way inside the crate to retrieve her treat - its time to add a verbal cue to the behavior. To do this: say "Kennel Up" or "Crate" (or whatever you want to call it) AS she is walking in. This will pair the word/s with the behavior. Do not say it before she walks in - say it AS she is walking in (perhaps when her head is to the middle of the crate). You will have to do this pairing of the verbal cue with the behavior about a dozen times before she knows the cue.

NEXT

Toss the treat in but say your cue "Crate" BEFORE she goes in to get the treat. Do this several sessions for several days.

NEXT

Without tossing the treat inside - say your cue "Crate" and if she goes inside - praise her and hand her the treat. Then ask her to come out and repeat the exercise (if she doesn't go in when asked - repeat the previous step a few more days).

Soon she will be happily going into the crate when asked. Praise and treat every time you ask her to do so.

NEXT

To get her to spend more time in the crate, tie a Kong toy stuffed with yummy pasty food (peanut butter, liverwurst, spray cheese, canned dog or cat food, etc.) to the back of the crate (string a thin rope through the top hole and knot the rope)



Ask her to "Crate" and when she goes inside she will find the stuffed Kong. She won't be able to take the kong out of the crate because its tied inside so she should just lie down and lick all the yummy paste out of it. Do this every day.

NEXT

Once she is good with going in and licking all the stuff out of the Kong you can start to shut the door while she is busy with the Kong. Do this every day - increasing the duration of time she is inside.

NEXT

Ask her to "crate" - give her the stuffed Kong and then sit in your chair to read or watch TV while she is inside eating the food out of the Kong.

*Additionally - at this point you can start to feed her dinner inside the crate.

NEXT

Once you are at this stage you can start to leave the room while she is eating the food out of the Kong or her dinner. At first, just leave and come right back. Then start wandering around the house in and out of the room while she is eating. Eventually, you should be able to leave the room for the whole time she is eating.

NEXT

Start to leave the house while she is in the crate with her Kong. At first, for only a few seconds, then a few minutes, then longer.

Things that can help during this process:

1. Adaptil (calming dog pheromone) spray - spray inside the crate before each session.
2. "Through a Dog's Ear" CD - calming music played during the crate game.
3. Rescue Remedy - a natural calming remedy you can put in the dog's food or on a treat for him to eat.

* The most important part of this program is to *GO SLOWLY*. If you rush the process you will not be successful. It may take a month to get your dog to accept spending significant time in the crate. The hope is that this will become her comfort zone for when you are away or when there is a storm or whatever provokes anxiety in your dog.