



Training your dog to be alone, not just when you're not home but when you're in another room or when you're interacting with another dog, is important. Being able to be comfortable behind a gate or in a crate is a skill that will be helpful while traveling, while at the vet, if your dog needs to be boarded or attend doggy daycare, or if you have visitors or get a new pet at some point. It's also very useful in teaching a new dog or puppy manners in the home through management (no you may not beg while we eat dinner or jump up on our guests).

This handout applies to teaching puppies or adult dogs to be confined in a space such as a crate, kennel, x pen or behind a baby gate.

- 1) Take your dog to the space and spend some time throwing treats in and letting your dog run freely in and out. Play the game without attempting to close the dog inside for as long as it takes for them to be comfortable
- 2) Once they're comfortable running in and out, you can now close the door as they run in to eat the treats, and opening it as they finish. Don't wait for them to get upset, bark, scratch at the door, etc
- 3) When your dog is happy to eat inside the confinement area, you can begin to do longer periods. Bait the confinement area with a stuffed Kong, puzzle toy or bone: whatever your dog will be really eager to eat. Snuffle mats are ideal for this as they will occupy the dog for a while but they cannot remove the treat from the area if the door is open
- 4) As they are eating the treat, walk away for 30 seconds, and come back *before* they're done eating. Open the door and wait for them to finish their toy/chewie. The dog is now free to leave the confinement area
- 5) You can also feed them their meals in their special confinement areas to increase the positive associations with the area - leave the door open if necessary

To prepare for longer confinement after the dog/puppy has run out of the food toy, use gradual desensitization. Stay close to the confinement area while they eat and after they finish. Be present but don't give attention or additional food. You can sit by the crate and read or be on an electronic device, you can set up the crate right next to you as you watch TV (even on the same level as you!) or you can do laundry on top of the crate, etc. Let the dog know that you are there but they are entertaining themselves currently, and you're not available for play or food.



If you have a dog or puppy who is very resistant to or has very negative associations with being confined/crated, you can do the previously listed games and activities with the door open. You can tie a food stuffed toy or edible chewy to the crate or put a snuffle mat in the confinement area to keep the dog inside. In the meantime, you can use alternative management strategies such as tethers or waist-leashing.

Tips for Success

- Always ensure that the dog's needs are met before confining - that they have had sufficient physical and mental exercise, social interactions and that they have been "emptied" and don't have to potty. exercise, social interaction, mental exercise
- Try placing the puppy in the crate when they are already tired or fallen asleep, instead of shoving a puppy in and waiting for them to become tired/settled
- Set up your confinement area or crate in a well used area so the puppy/dog does not feel "banished"
- Consider using soothing music or white noise to help the dog/puppy settle
- Ensure that the confinement area has lots of chewies/toys in addition to edible products, and that the bedding is suitable (not too hot, not too cold, just right)
- For crates, you can use a blanket to cover and reduce stimulation as that helps some dogs be able to settle
- Use as large an area as possible. Even with crates, use the biggest that you can. If your puppy is pottying in the crate, they may need less time in the crate or more detailed housetraining, and you may make confinement worse by making the crate too small

It's OK to wait out a small amount of whining/fussing as the dog settles, but dogs should never be allowed to panic or "cry it out" in their crates, as this can lead to strong negative associations with crating that may be long-lasting.