



Crate Desensitization Checklist

Good crate training provides a number of benefits to owners and their dogs. A crate that is appropriately sized will help to teach a dog bladder and bowel control. This tendency to view the crate as a clean place is a huge benefit. A crate or kennel can offer a sense of security, which teaches them to settle and relax. Excitable dogs or puppies should expect and enjoy some downtime in the crate, which helps with emotional regulation. A crate is also a highly effective management system which prevents destructive and vigilant behavior, keeping your dog or puppy safe and out of trouble when you cannot supervise them directly!

To properly desensitize your dog to a crate, your training process must consist of gradual phases. This process can take days or weeks, depending on age, temperament and past experiences. It's important to keep two things in mind while crate training: the crate should always be associated with something pleasant and training should take place in a series of small steps. Don't move too fast. If used incorrectly, a dog can feel trapped and frustrated. Do keep in mind that for some dogs, crate training will not be an option.

Level I

To create a positive experience with the crate, practice the following exercises:

- Toss a treat inside the crate and let your dog get it then come out repeat 10x
- Offer your dog a Diggs Groove in the crate and leave the crate door open
- Feed your dog their meals in the crate and continue to leave the crate door open
- Give your dog fun interactive puzzles in their crate (i.e LickiMat, Snuffle Mat, Diggs Groove, Slow Bowl Feeder) and leave the crate door open
- Put their food, interactive puzzle, Kong or a treat in the crate and close the door... as they request for you to open the door to be let in, open the crate door and let them go in the crate.

Level II

Once your dog has built trust with going in the crate and they are comfortably staying in, begin to close the crate door behind. This time focus on creating your dog with moderate distraction and duration.

- With your dog already in the crate, take a few steps away from them and come back and drop a few treats in their crate and repeat again 5x
- Practice crating your dog while you watch TV
- Practice crating your dog while you eat your dinner
- Practice crating your dog while you workout
- Practice crating your dog for 15-30 minutes with an interactive food puzzle

Level III

Once your dog is comfortable with being in their crate with distraction, focus on being out of sight and begin to generalize.

- Withhold on their reward until your dog goes in the crate first
- Practice crating your dog while you are at work
- Practice crating your dog while you have guest over
- Practice crating your dog while you go to the bathroom
- Practice crating your dog while you shower
- Practice crating your dog in another room or a different part of the house
- Practice crating your dog for 1 hour or more