

# Crate Training



Tony La Russa's  
**Animal  
Rescue  
Foundation**  
[www.arflife.org](http://www.arflife.org)

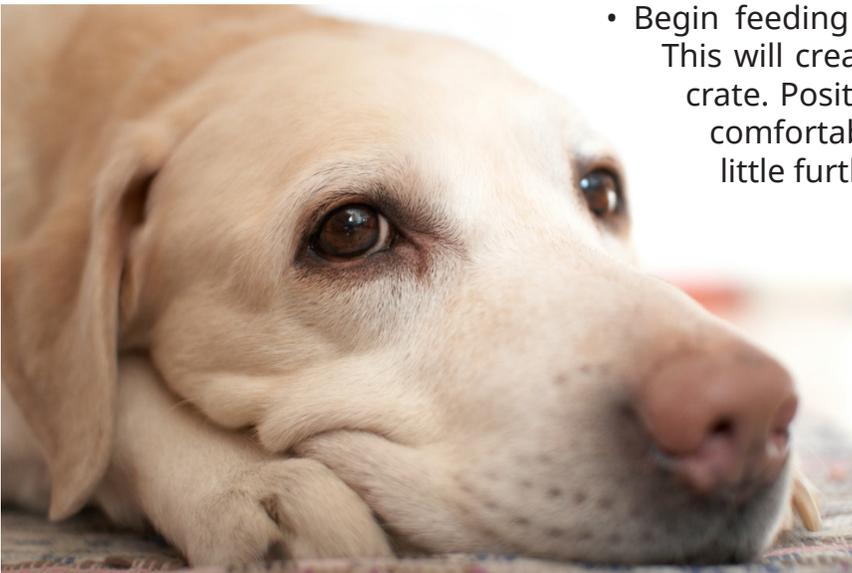
Dog crates come in a wide selection of styles and sizes. When choosing a crate the most important consideration is your dog's size. The crate should be just big enough for your dog to stand up, turn around and lay down comfortably. A crate that is too large will not inhibit your dog from using one end as his bathroom. Crates are available in a variety of styles. Plastic Vari Kennels and collapsible metal crates are the most common styles and are available for purchase at the ARF boutique and popular pet supply stores. If you are concerned about your dog's crate cramping your style, there are specialty crates that are made to function and blend in with your existing furniture.

Expect crate training to take a couple weeks. Some dogs take to crate training faster and some longer, depending on their age, temperament and past experiences. There are two important factors to successful crate training. First, the crate should always be associated with something good; never force a dog in to a crate or use it for a timeout or as punishment. Second, training should be broken into small steps and only progress when your dog is comfortable. Don't do too much too fast or you risk your dog having a bad experience which, in turn, will make the training process longer and more difficult.

## Step One: Dog Meet Crate

- Determine where you will keep the crate. Ideally, have it set up in an area where the family spends a lot of time, like the living room. Make the crate comfy by placing a blanket, dog bed, or towel inside. Remove the crate door or use a zip-tie to secure it to the side so it doesn't accidentally close during this step.
- Encourage your dog to investigate and enter the crate. Toss yummy treats into the crate and allow your dog to retrieve them. If your dog is hesitant to enter, make a trail of treats that starts outside the crate. The idea is to gradually have your dog comfortable going further into the crate to get the treats.
- End on a good note. Leave the training session with your dog wanting more.

## Step Two: Love Food, Love the Crate



- Begin feeding your dog his regular meals in his crate. This will create a positive association with being in the crate. Position the food bowl only as far back as he is comfortable entering and approximate the bowl a little further back in the crate with each feeding.
- Once your dog is all the way inside the crate happily eating his meal, you can close the crate door. At first, open the door as soon as he finishes his food. Every day increase the time he waits for you to open the door by 10 seconds, until he is staying in the crate for 10 minutes after eating.

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- If your dog begins to whine in the crate, you may have increased the length of time too quickly. Next feeding, shave off several seconds and gradually build the length of time back up. It's crucial that you do not let your dog out while he is whining. Otherwise, he'll learn that the way to get out of his crate is to whine and cry and he will continue to do it.

### **Step Three: Happily Ever After**

- Now that your dog is comfortable eating his meals in the crate you can begin to train him to spend quiet alone time inside. Stick around the house for the first few sessions. Calmly bait your dog in to the crate, give him a stuffed Kong or chew toy, close the door, and leave him for 20-30 minutes.
- When your dog can handle 30 minutes of quiet crate time, you can start to leave him while you leave the house to run quick errands. Start with short errands and gradually work up to 4 hours. The general rule of thumb is that dogs should be offered a potty break outside of their crate every 4 hours. For puppies, less time in the crate before potty breaks is recommended.
- Vary at which point in your departure routine you crate your dog and the length of time your dog is crated. Even after the initial training is complete, you should continue to ensure the crate is a pleasant place for your dog to settle down. Always leave him with something yummy and safe to chew.