



Crate/Kennel - Creating a Positive Association

A Crate or Kennel can be a very safe place for your dog. It is very important that a positive association be made so that the dog looks forward to spending time in his new safe place.

Bringing the Crate or Kennel home

When you first bring the crate/kennel home and set it up, **don't** put Fido in the kennel and close the door. The first thing to do is to create a positive experience for Fido relative to the kennel. This can take some time, up to a couple of days.

- The crate should be put in a quiet area of the home, not in a doorway, not in a basement, not in the garage. Fido should feel safe and secure but not lonely or abandoned. Puppies can be particularly sensitive and need lots of bonding time with their new human family. The area should be comfortable and draft-free.
- Do not force Fido into the kennel. First, put a couple of Fido's favorite toys and some treats in the kennel. When Fido shows interest in the kennel, give praise and reinforcements. Fido needs to say "hey, this place is really cool".
- Do not force Fido into the kennel and close the door. Encourage Fido into the kennel with toys and treats. You can feed Fido his meals in the kennel with the door open. Put his food bowl in the back of the kennel so that Fido has to enter the kennel to eat his food.
- Give Fido the time and opportunity to explore his new kennel on his own. When you catch him exploring his new kennel, praise him and reinforce it.
- If Fido associates "every time I go in the kennel, people leave me" Fido will have a negative association to the kennel.
- If Fido associates "every time I go in the kennel, there is something GREAT in there for me to do, Fido will have a positive association to the kennel.
- You will know when Fido is ready to be in the kennel with the door closed by how often he explores the kennel. If he is not exploring and going in the kennel on his own, encourage him to do so. When Fido is ready to be in the kennel with the door closed, **DO NOT** open the kennel door when Fido fusses. Barking, whining, pawing at the door etc. The first time you open the door, Fido learns "hey, if I make a fuss, I don't have to stay in here." Even if the positive association has been made, Fido may still need to learn that he will be staying in his safe place overnight or when people are not home. Be sure Fido has plenty to do, stuff a Kong, give a bully stick, supply safe toys.
- Be sure you pay attention to Fido's potty schedule. Do not leave Fido in the kennel so long that he needs to potty and does not get the opportunity to potty in the proper place.
- Fido should be expected to spend some time in the kennel when everyone is home. This will insure that Fido does not associate "when I go in the kennel, people leave me".
- If you purchase a wire kennel, putting a blanket over the top of the kennel can create a very safe feeling environment for Fido.