



Kennel - Playing Crate Games

Introduction

All PAWS puppies are crate trained. We want our puppies to see the crate as their happy place and a place they can go if they need some time to themselves. Your puppy should always sleep in its crate at night, be crated when you are away from home, or you are not able to supervise them.

Starting to play some crate games with your young puppy builds on the concept that the crate is a happy place for them and starts some foundation work for the cues “Kennel,” “Wait,” and “Free.”

Crate games are also part of teaching your young puppy basic manners and will be very helpful when they are much bigger as nobody likes being bowled over by a rambunctious dog rapidly exiting their crate!

Playing Crate Games With Your Puppy

Follow the steps below to start playing crate games with your young puppy.

- ☐ Stage 1 - With your puppy outside of the kennel, toss a few pieces of kibble into the kennel. Let your puppy make the choice to go into the kennel to get the treats. When they go into the kennel, have a praise party with lots of “Yay! Good puppy!” For now, leave the door fully open and let them make the choice to come out. Repeat until your puppy makes the choice to go into the kennel as soon as you toss the treats in there. Then you can move onto the next stage!
- ☐ Stage 2 - Now we are going to play a game of patience with your puppy! As in the previous step, toss some treats into the crate and your puppy should go in straight away. This time though, we are going to close the door. Then, start to open the door,

and if your puppy starts to rush out, close the door until your puppy backs off and waits. Your puppy will quickly learn that they must wait for the door to be opened. Repeat this until your puppy makes the choice to wait before being allowed to come out.

Setting Up for Crate Success

- 🐾 Your puppy's crate is their happy place so sending them there should always be a positive thing!
- 🐾 If your puppy cries or barks in their crate, as hard as it is to ignore them, do not let them out of the crate while they are crying or barking unless you are certain that they are crying or barking because they need to go outside. If you take them out while they are crying or barking, they will quickly have you trained to let them out whenever they demand! So, wait it out until there's a momentary break in the crying or barking. This will help teach your puppy to self-settle and will help prevent crate issues later.
- 🐾 Avoid praising or rewarding your puppy as they come out of their crate. If they learn that the best part of crate training is when they get to leave the crate, it will only make them dislike being in the crate and want to be let out even more, which is not going to help them. Instead, make sure all praising and rewarding happens while they are in the crate to help make it a desirable place to be.
- 🐾 Please do not put any bedding in your puppy's crate! Young puppies may have an accident in the crate, and the bedding will absorb it and they may then learn not to hold it in the crate. Older puppies may get bored and chew up the bedding leading to intestinal blockages and expensive surgeries!