Crate training can take days to weeks, depending on your dog's age, temperament, and past experiences. Keep two things in mind while crate training. First, the crate should always be associated with something pleasant for the dog, and second, training should take place in a series of small steps - don't try to do too much too fast.

**Step 1 Introducing your dog to the crate.**

Put the crate in an area of your house where the family spends a lot of time, such as the family room. Put a soft blanket or towel in the crate. Bring your dog over to the crate, and talk to him in an excited, happy tone of voice. Make sure the crate door is securely fastened opened so it won’t hit your dog and frighten him.

To encourage your dog to enter the crate, drop some small tidbits of food around it, then just inside the door, and finally all the way inside. If he refuses to go all the way in at first, that's OK. DO NOT force him to enter. Repeat this experience until your dog will calmly walk into the crate to get the food. If your dog isn’t interested in food, try tossing a favorite toy in the crate. This process may take just a few minutes or as long as several days.

**Step 2 Feeding your dog in the crate**

After introducing your dog to the crate, begin feeding him his regular meals near the crate for awhile. This will create pleasant associations with the crate and decrease his fear of it. If your dog is readily entering the crate when you begin Step 2, put the food dish all the way at the back of the crate. If your dog is still reluctant to enter the crate, put the dish only as far inside as he will readily go without becoming fearful or anxious. Each time you feed him, place the dish a little more toward the back of the crate.

Once your dog is comfortably eating his food while standing in the crate, you can close the door while he’s eating. At first, open the door as soon as he finishes his meal, let him out, and praise him. With each succeeding feeding, leave the door closed a few minutes longer, until he is staying in the crate without protesting for 10 minutes or so after eating. If he begins to whine to be let out, you may have increased the duration of crating too quickly. Next time, try leaving him for a shorter time period. Be sure to release him from the crate when he is not whining or barking. If vocalizing results in getting out, the behavior will be reinforced and a problem will develop. You can feed him in the crate until he is comfortable eating there - you can move back to his regular feeding location after the crate training process is completed.

**Step 3 Conditioning your dog to the crate for longer time periods.**

After your dog is eating his regular meals in the crate with no sign of fear or anxiety, you can confine him there for short time periods while you are home. Call him over to the crate and give him a tidbit. Give him a command to enter such as “kennel up”. Encourage him by pointing to the inside of the crate with a tidbit in your hand. After your dog enters the crate, give him the tidbit and close the door. Sit quietly near the crate for 5 to 10 minutes and then into another room for a few minutes. Return, sit quietly again for a short time, and then release your dog. Repeat this procedure several times a day. With each repetition, gradually increase the length of time the dog is crated, and the length of time you are out-of-sight. Once your dog will quietly remain in the crate for about 30 minutes with you out of sight the majority of the time, you can begin leaving him crated when you are gone for short time periods, and/or letting him sleep there at night. This may take several days or several weeks.
**Step 4**

*Part A - Crating when left alone*

After your dog is spending about 30 minutes in the crate without becoming anxious or afraid while you are there, you can begin leaving him crated for short time periods when you leave the house. Put him in the crate using your regular command and a tidbit. You will want to vary when you put your dog in the crate during your “getting ready to leave” routine. Although he should not be crated for a long time before you leave, you can crate him anywhere from 5 to 20 minutes prior to leaving. Do not make leave-takings emotional and prolonged, but matter-of-fact. Praise your dog briefly and give him a tidbit for entering the crate, and then leave quietly. When you arrive home do not reward your dog for excited behavior by responding to him in an excited, enthusiastic way. Keep arrivals very low key and reserve playful, excited greeting behavior for after he has calmed down. Continue to crate your dog for short time periods from time to time when you are home so that he does not associate crating with being left alone.

*Part B - Crating at Night*

Put your dog in the crate using your regular command and a tidbit. Initially, it may be a good idea (especially for puppies) to put the crate in your bedroom or nearby in a hallway. Puppies often need to go outside to eliminate during the night, and you’ll want to be able to hear your puppy when he whines to be let outside. Older dogs too should initially be kept nearby so that crating does not become associated with social isolation. Once your dog is sleeping comfortably through the night with his crate near you, you can begin to gradually move it to the location you prefer.

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**POTENTIAL PROBLEMS**

**Whining**

If your dog whines or cries while in the crate at night, it may be difficult to decide whether he is whining to be let out of the crate, or whether he needs to be let outside to eliminate. If you followed the training procedures, he should not have been reinforced in the past for whining by being released from his crate. Try ignoring the whining. Your dog may stop if he is just testing you. Yelling at him or pounding on the crate may only make things worse. If the whining continues after you have ignored it for several minutes, you can repeat the phrase your dog has associated with going outside to eliminate. If he responds and becomes excited, take him outside. This should be a trip with a purpose - not play time. If you are convinced that your dog does not need to eliminate, the best response is to ignore the whining until it stops. Expect it to get worse before it gets better. You cannot give in, otherwise, you will have taught your dog to whine loud and long to get what he wants! If you have progressed very gradually through the training steps and have not done too much too fast, you will be less likely to encounter this problem. If the problem becomes unmanageable, you may need to restart the crate training process.

**Separation Anxiety**

Attempting to use the crate as a remedy for a separation anxiety problem (your dog is anxious when left alone and becomes destructive, house-soils, or vocalizes for long time periods) it will not resolve the problem. A crate may physically prevent your dog from being destructive, but if he is still anxious at being left alone, he may injure himself trying to escape from the crate, soil in the crate or bark or whine all day. Separation anxiety problems can be resolved with counter conditioning and desensitization procedures. You may need to consult a professional animal behaviorist for help.