

## Crate Training and Containing Your Pit Bull



### Why do I need a crate or kennel? Can't I just leave my dog in the back yard when I'm gone?

Generally, no. If you are away from your home for hours every day, it's not a good idea to leave your dog unsupervised in the back yard. Dogs often like to dig, and many dogs have dug under fences and escaped. Other dogs are capable of jumping a six-foot fence, and Pit Bulls, in particular, can be escape artists. Boards get loose, and dogs can push through them. The wind can knock over part of your fence while you're away, and your dog can then escape your back yard. If your dog escapes your back yard, it can be hit by a car or get into fights with other animals. If your dog causes harm to any person, animal, or property, you can be held liable.

### What is a crate?



A crate is a plastic or wire box that can be your dog's bed and a safe place for your dog to stay when he or she cannot be supervised.

Crates like the one pictured create a more den-like experience for your dogs. Wire crates, on the other hand, let your dog see more of his or her environment and, as a bonus, generally fold flat for easy travel and storage.

The type of crate you buy is up to you. There are even very strong crates made specifically for dogs that are escape artists. One such crates is the "empire crate" made by ProSelect, which has heavy bars and two sliding/locking latches for the door.

### Why should I crate my dog?

Crating allows you to safely contain your dog and, when needed, keep your dog separate from other animals. In addition, it can become a haven for your dog and act as his or her own personal space. To be safest, collars should be removed when your dog is locked in his or her crate.

### How do I crate-train my dog?

Crate-training can be accomplished in many ways. The easiest and best way to crate train your dog is to buy a crate, fill it with safe, comfortable bedding, and leave the door open. Put toys and food in the crate and let your dog go in and out at his or her own leisure. Feed your dog his or her meals in the crate, leaving the door open. Once your dog is going to the crate on his own and resting inside, you can start to close the door for short periods. A good time to introduce a closed door is during feeding time. As soon as your dog is done feeding, open the door.

When you leave your dog in the crate and close the door, always treat your dog. Never use the crate as a punishment.

## Crate Training and Containing Your Pit Bull



### What size crate should I buy?

For puppies, smaller crates work better for housebreaking. Puppy crates should be just big enough for the dog to stand up and turn around in easily, but not so big that the puppy can poop in one corner and rest in another. For adult, housebroken dogs, buy the largest crate you can practicably fit in your home. You want a crate that will allow your dog to comfortably stretch out when sleeping.

### How long should I crate my dog?

That depends on your dog's energy level. Adult dogs can be crated up to 8 hours, but dogs are social creatures that need plenty of attention and stimulation. If you work 8 hours a day, it's not a good idea to crate your dog 8 hours a day, every day. If you need to crate your dog for 8 hours once in a while, that's generally acceptable.

Ideally, if your dog must be crated with the door closed every day, your dog should be crated no more than 4-5 hours per day, and you should make sure that, when you're home, your dog gets plenty of exercise and attention. Many dogs are happy to snooze throughout the day, and dogs that are more naturally sedentary may not mind spending longer in their crates. Still, it's important to socialize and exercise your dog. If you have to contain your dog for longer periods on a regular basis, consider a larger kennel that is properly sheltered, dig-proof, and has a top so your dog cannot jump out. Some people even create dog-proofed rooms for their dogs while they are at work, and more mature dogs can often be left in the home loose.

If you have more than one pet, however, it's a good idea to keep them separate when you are not able to supervise them. Fights can break out over toys and space, even in dogs that are the best of friends.

### What do I do if I work all day and don't want to leave the dog loose in the house or the back yard?



Consider purchasing a strong kennel that has a dig-proof floor and a top. Chain link kennels are generally cheap and weak, and many dogs can easily escape from them. Welded wire kennels are often much stronger. You can purchase kennels in many different sizes, from 6x10 to 20x40 and even larger. You can also create a secure run along the side of your house for your dog, but make sure that your dog cannot dig or jump out of the run or push through a fence or gate. Also make sure your dog has plenty of shade, shelter, and water.

Always entice your dog into the kennel with tasty treats. Some people toss a handful of biscuits, steak or other goodies into the kennel so the dog is kept occupied for

a few minutes. If your dog is not a strong chewer, you can even fill a black Kong with natural, salt-free peanut butter or other goodies to keep your dog occupied (but be warned that dogs that can tear off chunks of the Kong may swallow those, which can lead to a life-threatening situation).