

# Buyers Guide to Dog Crates



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In this expert guide to dog crates, we're going to discuss choosing the right type of dog crate, evaluating the perfect size, and offer tips on properly training your puppy.

Good dog crates are designed to:

- Transport
- Contain
- Train

Point blank, if the dog crate isn't able to transport, contain and train your dog, then it's not something you want to buy for your dog.

## The Size of the Crate Matters

In this case, size matters. You obviously don't want to buy a crate that is too small. Every time your puppy is inside that crate, he should feel comfortable and protected – he should never feel as if he is trapped. If you're buying a training crate, you must make sure it is kept clean and well ventilated.

Ideally, your dog should be able to stand up inside the crate and turn around, without touching the edges. There should be around 4 inches of space above the dog's head when he stands up inside the crate. If you have a puppy that is in the growing stage, then you should consider renting a kennel so that you can "trade up" to a size that is more appropriate when the dog grows bigger.

## Similar to a Den

Domestic dogs are a couple of genetic steps from their ancestors ...wolves. When these dogs are in the wild, they raise their young and sleep in dens that are protected from danger. Interesting, right? When you use a crate for training your dog, what's neat is the natural instinct of the dog shines – it turns to the crate for safety and comfort.

Dogs don't normally use the bathroom in their "dens," so crates are handy for limiting access to areas that he shouldn't be in. Crates come in handy for offering a certain amount of control while you're house-training your puppy/dog.

## Training Guidelines to Follow

Before you go out and purchase a crate, it is important that you understand these training guidelines.

Length of Time – Some people, and we personally do not understand this, use crates and leave their dog in it day and night – they only bring the dog out when they are ready

for him. This is a form of animal abuse. When a dog is crated day in and day out, they aren't getting enough exercise and human interactions. In return, this leaves them feeling anxious or depressed. Puppies that are younger than six months of age shouldn't be left in a crate for longer than three hours at a time. This is because they aren't able to control their bowels and bladder for that long. The same thing goes for adult dogs that are being housetrained. Yes, they can probably hold it, but they don't know they're supposed to hold it.

**Don't Use for Punishment** – We understand, when your dog gets in trouble, you may feel that putting him in the crate is a way to go. Dogs aren't like kids – you cannot put them in time-out in a corner and expect them to understand. If you use a crate as a way to punish your dog, then he will no longer look at it as a safe and comfortable spot. Instead, he will look at it with fear and refuse to go in it ...you certainly don't want that. When your dog is in the crate, you want him to enjoy his time, not hate it.

**Gain Trust** – Once you gain trust in your dog and believe he's not going to destroy your house, you can stop crating your dog. Afterwards, you can leave the cage open and let him go in there voluntarily.

### **Making the Crate a Great Place**

As your dog matures, if you have been crate training him, the crate might become a source of containment. As long as you effectively train him, your dog will want to return to the crate to sleep or if he feels he is in danger. For example, when there's thunderstorms, you may find your dog running to the crate – this is because it has become his safe place to go to.

Looking online, we find a variety of companies that offer a line of top notch crates that you can easily integrate into your room's décor.

### **Using Them on Planes, Trains and Automobiles**

When you're traveling, the safety of your four-legged best friend should come as a priority. There are some states that may require restraints for animals that are in cars. Regardless of the dogs temperament, when a dog is loose and running around in the car, it can distract the driver and cause accidents, which could injure or kill the dog and passengers.

Also, we feel the need to note that you should never leave the dog in a parked vehicle during hot months. Most states are actively enforcing this law and will punish owners that leave their dogs in cars.

## **Safety Tips Related to Cars**

Ventilation - When you are traveling in your car with your dog in a crate, make sure there is plenty of ventilation around the crate.

Adequate Space – There should be adequate space around the crate when you have it packed in your vehicle.

Buckle the Crate – You need to make sure you buckle the crate to the seat or attach it securely to the floor. Make sure the latches and locks are safe.

## **Airlines**

Airlines have a tendency to offer a variety of travel options for dogs. On any airline, regardless of who you are, crating your pet is mandatory. Dogs that travel on a commercial airline are required to be transported in an International Air Transport Association compliant crate.

Requirements Include:

- The kennel will need to be made of plastic that is sturdy.
- The container needs to be big enough for the dog to stand up, turn around and lie down in.
- While this may not be an IATA requirement, there are many airlines that require steel crate hardware, instead of those plastic fasteners for obvious reasons.
- As for the locking system, the crate needs to have a secure, spring loaded locking system with pends that go beyond the horizontal extrusions below and above the door.
- Both food and water bowls will need to be securely attached to the inside of the front door. They must be able to be refilled from the outside container, without having to open the door.
- It goes without saying that the crate needs to have ventilation on all sides for international travel. For domestic travel the crate needs to have ventilation on three sides.
- On the top and side of the crate, it needs to have “Live Animal” stickers. The stickers need to be at least one inch tall.
- Wheels are not allowed. If the crate has wheels, you will need to remove them or securely tape them so that the kennel does not roll off with your dog inside it.
- The crate will need to have the dog’s name and your contact information on it.

## **Materials**

Dog crates are available in a variety of materials. In this section of the guide, we're going to take a look at the different type of materials you can choose from.

**Travel Dog Crates** – These type of dog crates offer superior durability and strength. They feature full ventilation, heavy-duty construction and are very visible. Travel crates come in handy for driving or flying with your dog, plus, many people choose to use them for training.

**Plastic Dog Crates** – These type are normally made out of a poly-blend with chrome-plated steel bar door, which is durable. Features of plastic dog crates include a leak-proof bottom and ventilated sides. They give the dog privacy and are approved for airline travel.

**Dog Wire Crates** – These type of crates offer maximum security, ventilation and are portable. There are some dog wire crates that are capable of folding down so that you can easily store them. Many have also stated that these type of crates are easier to clean than the others due to the maximized open space.

## **The Size**

It goes without saying, but dog crates are available in different sizes. As we previously stated, the size is important and you should use a dog crate size chart. The length and height of your dog will help you determine the correct size of crate you should purchase. As stated above, the ideal size should allow your dog to stand up, without having to duck his head below his shoulders. He should be able to lie down and stretch out fully, without being cramped.

## **Should I Go for Wire or Plastic?**

The style of the crate you go for will all depend on the size of your dog, the type of coat, the weather you plan on traveling in and the climate you live.

## **Plastic Dog Crates**

If you have a dog that is smaller in size and you live in a climate that is cool, then the plastic crate will allow your dog to retain more heat so that they stay warm. The plastic crates are usually the only ones that are approved for airline travel, so it's the type you should consider if you plan on traveling by plane with your dog.

What follows here are the pros and cons of buying a plastic dog crate.

## **Advantages**

**More Privacy** – With the plastic dog crate, there is more privacy because there's less openings, so your dog doesn't really see out. This technique can cut down on how much a dog whines while in his crate as there's less distractions.

**Better Insulation** – Plastic dog crates offer better insulation than wire crates. If you own a small dog, puppy or a dog that has a short coat, then a plastic crate can help him retain body heat, making it valuable in cold climates. If you own a dog that is large or long-haired, or if you live in a warmer climate, this may not be a benefit.

**Can Be Airline-Approved** – Plastic dog crates can be airline approved, unlike wire dog crates. Whenever you fly, the dog can go with you as long as you have the right crate. Before you buy a crate, if you plan on traveling via airline, you should contact the airline in order to make sure a plastic dog crate will meet their safety guidelines.

**Can be used as a dog bed** – You can use a plastic dog crate as a dog bed. You can also store it as there's many plastic crates that come apart for storage. Some plastic crates make it so that you can remove the top so you can use the bottom as a comfortable dog bed. Mind you, not every plastic crate on the market is versatile, so before you buy the first one you come across, make sure the features you desire are included.

**Usually Light in Weight** – Plastic dog crates are usually light in weight, even if you go for a bigger dog crate. Since it is light in weight, this will make it easier for you to travel or move the crate around.

## **Disadvantages**

With plastic dog crates, while they have many advantages, there are some disadvantages that you need to be aware of.

**Less Ventilation** – As you may have guessed, the disadvantage would be the fact that there is less ventilation. There's an increased amount of insulation, which comes at the expense of reduced air circulation. If you live in an environment that is hot, then you may want to skip past a plastic dog crate as your dog may get hot.

**Feelings of Isolation** – Due to the fact that there is less ventilation in this dog crate, it may increase the feelings of isolation, which isn't a good thing.

**Can't Fold Flat** – Most plastic dog crates can come apart, but you cannot fold them flat.

**Can Trap Odors** – Also due to the fact that there isn't a whole lot of ventilation, it can trap odors. The plastic material can collect doggy odors, making it hard to keep the crate smelling fresh.

## **Wire Dog Crate**

If you don't plan on traveling by plane, then the wire dog crate would be a good option. This type of crate is also better for those that live in hot climates, like Florida, because the crate offers plenty of ventilation in order to make sure your dog stays cool. When you buy a wire crate, make sure the bars are spaced close enough in order to keep your dog's paws and head from squeezing through.

## **Advantages:**

Folding Ability and Divider Panels – What's cool about wire dog crates is their divider panels and folding ability. Wire dog crates come in a variety of different sizes and many of them have divider panels that you can use. If you're buying a crate for a puppy, you can go for a larger crate that he can still use when he is grown. Take note that those wire crates that have corner drop pins may be sturdier than folding crates, but they are less convenient to store away.

Ventilation – Wire crates are suitable for dogs with longer coats or for those that live in hot climates. The crate is completely open, so there is plenty of air circulation going through the crate – this makes it so that the dog stays cool.

Allows the Dog to See his Environment – The dog will be able to see what is going on around him. This can reduce feeling of separation and isolation. Depending on your particular dog, however, this may be a disadvantage and we will explain that disadvantage in a bit.

Easy to Clean – We find that wired crates are easier to clean than plastic ones. Wired crates usually have a tray underneath that slides out. The wire also doesn't hold on to odors.

## **Disadvantages**

Could cause your dog to whine – You should keep the crate in an area that is near people, so that he still feels as if he is part of the pack. However, if you have the type of dog that has a tendency to whine while he is in the crate, then the wire crate may be an issue. Allowing your dog to see what is going on around him is an advantage, but depending on the dog, it could stress him out and give him feelings of separation. If this is your problem, then we recommend a crate cover in order to keep the dog occupied.

## **Conclusion**

When your dog is in the crate, make sure he has something to do, especially if you plan on leaving him alone for 3 hours or so. There are so many different crates to choose from, just make sure you look over the quality of the crate as well as the features in order to make sure it fits all of your needs.