The benefits of crate training your dog
By Jane Aten

You have friends coming over. Your dog jumps on everyone. You've been meaning to do training with your dog, but life happens. You're tired. You don't want to train; you just want to relax with your friends. Enter the crate. Your dog chills. Your guests aren't jumped on. You get to relax.

A crate can be a dog's safe space where they can turn their brain off and simply relax. They don't need to worry about barking at the mail carrier or following you to the bathroom — they're off duty. When dogs jump up on people, it's partially for affection and attention, and it's partially an anxiety-based behavior.

The first night I brought my dog, Rugby, home, I wanted to rip my hair out. I called a fellow trainer at work, panicked, saying that Rugby wouldn't stop running and walking around the house — he never stopped moving. She told me to put him in a crate. I said I felt bad because he clearly still had energy to burn. She reminded me that his previous owner crate trained him and that he may need it to feel safe enough to settle. I asked Rugby to go into the crate and closed the door. He immediately laid down and took one big, deep breath. Within minutes, he was fast asleep.

Both of my dogs are trained to crate in various locations — not just at home and at bedtime. (My dogs don't even sleep in their crates at night. They sleep in bed with me.) One of the places I regularly crate my dogs is in my car. They've learned that when they're in the car crates, it's a good time to take a nap. Sometimes we're going on road trips, dog sports competitions or out to the beach. When the weather isn't too hot, they're also comfortable snoozing in their car crates whenever and wherever. For example, my dogs come to work with me every day. Sometimes I'll go to a friend's house for dinner after work. My dogs had a day full of activities. Now they get to take a nap in their cozy car dens, enjoying the breeze that comes through the windows. They have beds, blankets, pillows and water buckets, with fans attached to their crates when it's a little warm.

Crates don't have to be ugly: Some people don't like the visual of their dog in a "cage," and I completely empathize with that. Luckily, there are many companies making crates in fun, flashy, custom colors.

Crating isn't for every dog, especially dogs with severe separation anxiety. Dogs should never be forced into crates, and dogs shouldn't be left inside a crate for more than four hours during the daytime (young puppies should only be kept in the crate for 30 minutes to three hours, depending on their age). Crate training can take a bit of time and patience, but if done right, both you and your

dog will enjoy a lot more relaxation.

Marin Humane offers free guidance on how to crate train your dog on its website at marinhumane.org/oh-behave.

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