

Crate Training for Cats!

Getting a cat into their carrier can be one of the most frustrating and stressful events of cat ownership, for the cat and the owner! Cats are not stupid animals. They know when the cat carrier comes out they go to the vet! For most cats, this is the only time they leave the comfort and safety of their home, making it all the more terrifying. But the good news is that teaching your cat to love their carrier can be done using the following steps. This is ideally started with a new kitten, but can also be worked on with adult cats.

Daily Changes To Make

- If you have a soft sided carrying bag, you really need to buy a hard sided plastic carrier, preferably one with a top and front door. The soft bags simply collapse and do not allow the cat to go into the carrier easily by themselves.
- An important first step is to keep the carrier out in the open at all times! Most people only get the carrier out right before they try to stuff their cat in it. Cats very quickly learn that the sight of a carrier means wedge yourself in the farthest corner under the bed!
- Open the carrier up as much as possible, either by opening the top and front door, or take the top off of the carrier all together. This will help the cat feel more at ease and not trapped. As the cat becomes comfortable you can put the top on or close the top door.
- Feed your cat near the carrier. Each day feed your cat a little bit closer to the carrier, eventually building up to feeding your cat in the carrier.
- Consider placing a “Feliway” diffuser in the room where the cat carrier is. This is a pheromone product designed to help cats be less anxious. It also comes in a pump spray form which can be sprayed directly on bedding in the carrier.

Activities

(Work for only a few minutes at a time, several times per day)

- Leave amazing treats (like tuna or turkey bits) your cat never gets any other time in the opening of the carrier. As your cat is happily taking those you can begin to place them farther into the carrier until they are eventually all the way in the back.
- When your cat is happily taking treats out of the back of the carrier let your cat see you put a few treats in and close the door so your cat can't get to them. After your cat spends some time trying to get to the treats, open the door and let him in. Now he wants to go in the carrier!
- Play games tossing treats in for your cat to chase. Give an extra treat while in the carrier.
- Hang toys in the carrier for the cat to bat at.
- When your cat is happily going in the carrier by himself and eating meals in the carrier, you can begin to close the door and open it right back up. Feed a treat to your cat and close the door again. Do this repeatedly and then eventually build up the time the door is closed.
- When your cat is comfortable with the door being closed, pick the carrier up off the ground a few inches, put it down and open the door. Feed your cat a treat. Gradually pick the carrier up higher and for longer times then add in taking steps. Always give your cat a treat after every activity.
- At this time you begin cuing your cat to “Go Kennel” as you begin to play your “carrier games”. Reward your cat heavily for entering the carrier after you have given your cue.
- Never move on to a higher difficulty level until your cat is comfortable at the current level. If your cat panics at any step, go back to the earlier steps and work a bit longer.
- At all times it is very important to remain calm and keep this feeling like a game. If you become stressed out about this process, you will surely stress out your cat. Removing as much stress from the situation as possible will help your cat be more relaxed and learn faster. Stress only slows down the learning process.