Exercise Pen & Kennel FAQs

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

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What is the difference between an exercise pen and a kennel?
Exercise pens and kennels give your dog space to play and roam, and keep him safely contained. Pens are typically smaller than kennels. They're also configurable, portable, frequently used indoors, and often thought of as temporary kennels. Kennels are large, frequently used outdoors, and often become permanent fixtures. Both pens and kennels are typically made of sturdy, durable metal (although some exercise pens are made of plastic), and are available in a multitude of sizes.
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What do you mean by "configurable?"
Exercise pens are often referred to as configurable because they include several hinged panels which may be moved to form a circle, oval, square, rectangle, or other shape. A pen may also have available expansion panels, allowing you to change its size as necessary.
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Which is better for my large dog - a pen or kennel?
A kennel is often a better choice for your large dog than an exercise pen. A kennel - typically made from chain link - will provide your dog with a strong, secure, escape-proof enclosure he cannot move or knock down. If your large dog has enough strength, energy, and determination, he may move, knock down, or escape from a pen.
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Are exercise pens safe and stable?
Exercise pens are designed to be safe and stable. However, they are not designed to contain large numbers of dogs, or large dogs.
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How can I determine the strength of your wire exercise pens?
Wire pens have a specific wire spacing and corresponding wire gauge number. Wire spacing determines strength - the closer the spacing, the stronger the pen. Wire gauge number expresses the thickness - and therefore the durability - of the wire used in a cage. The smaller the number, the thicker the diameter, and the stronger the wire.
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Do exercise pens and kennels provide adequate exercise space for my dog?
Exercise pens and kennels are designed to provide your dog with a safe, self-contained space in which to play and exercise. However, they should not be considered an automatic substitute for regular exercise. Your dog needs a good amount of exercise to stay trim and healthy, so be sure you take your dog on regular walks, jogs, and so on.
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Can I combine two or more exercise pens to create a larger exercise pen?
All of our exercise pens allow you to connect two or more pens to create an even larger pen. The North States Pet Yard also includes expansion panels, which are ideal if you want to increase pen size in smaller increments.

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Which size exercise pen should I choose for my dog?
When choosing an exercise pen for your dog, be sure to measure your dog's height, especially when he is standing on his hind feet. Then, choose a pen that is slightly taller than your dog. Otherwise, he may be tempted to jump out. You must also consider your dog's weight and size when choosing a pen. Make sure you choose one with construction that will weather escape attempts as well as the rigors of rambunctious play.
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How do I keep my dog's exercise pen from moving?
Many exercise pens include stakes to fasten the pen to the ground when it is used outdoors. If yours does not include stakes, you can typically use common tent stakes. To keep your dog's pen moving around while using it indoors, you can surround it with a few old barbells, cement blocks, or anything that adds weight and stability.
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Will exercise pens rust?
Drs. Foster & Smith has selected exercise pens known for their durability. As such, our selection of wire exercise pens is designed to resist rust. However, to best prevent rust, keep your exercise pen dry and free of damage, and do not leave your exercise pen outside for long periods of time.
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Will exercise pens scratch my floor?
Although our exercise pens feature blunt ends that minimize surface scratching, you should avoid placing pens on tile or hardwood floors.
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Are your outdoor kennels hard to assemble?
Not at all. Outdoor kennels are accompanied by easy-to-understand, step-by-step assembly instructions. You will need basic tools such as pliers, an adjustable wrench, a hammer, and a tape measure.
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