

Crate Training your new Dog or Puppy

Canines are den animals, and need a special place that represents safety to them. Crates provide security for your dog or puppy when you are absent, as well as preventing destructive and possibly dangerous habits from developing. Crates allow you to restrict the dog's activity when he is ill, make trips to the vet and boarding easier for your dog. They will prevent injury in the event of a car accident or can be used to transport your dog on an airline. You can feed your dog in his crate, to encourage him to eat, or to prevent fights during mealtimes in multiple dog households.

Crate Training is especially recommended for young puppies. You will be more relaxed and happy with your pup if you know he can't destroy things while you are gone. Crating your puppy will prevent him from chewing on electrical cords, eating household poisons, or swallowing objects in your absence. Crates allow the pup to be confined in your bedroom with you and not isolated in the kitchen or garage, resulting in better bonding and less crying during the night. Crates are also extremely useful while house training. Puppies will instinctively try not to soil their own sleeping area, and you are right there if the puppy needs to relieve himself. When you need a rest from the puppy you can use the crate like a playpen.

Crates are not jail for dogs - that is a human perception. Puppies and older dogs will happily accept a crate if you do and if you work slowly to introduce the crate. Your attitude affects how the dog feels about it so make sure it is a positive one! Crates should always represent a safe haven for your dog and should NOT be used to discipline your dog or puppy.

Although the initial cost of a crate may seem high, when compared to the costs of repairing or replacing damage furniture and rugs, a trip to the emergency vet, or the heartache of having to surrender a pet that has developed destructive habits, it is an excellent investment.

Buy a crate that is large enough for your dog to stand up, sit, and turn around comfortably when he is full-grown. If it is too big for your new puppy, you can section off one end of the crate with a metal divider or cardboard boxes. This prevents him from eliminating at one end and sleeping at the other (defeating the purpose of the crate as a house training tool). Wire crates should be covered on the top and sides so that they are cozier and to protect the dog from drafts.

Introducing your dog to the crate

Expect to give your dog one to two weeks to become accustomed to the crate. You should keep the crate with you, in the room you are in, while teaching your dog to enter his crate on command. The crate can be moved to the bedroom as a sleeping area at night when he is comfortable with it.

- Assemble the crate out of sight of your dog and leave the door off, or tie it open for the first few days. On the first day, throw a goodie into the crate every 10 to 15 minutes. Let the dog find the goodie (draw his attention to it if he doesn't notice). Praise enthusiastically when your dog goes in the crate to get the goodie and ignore him when he leaves. Remove the top of the crate if the dog is still hesitant to enter the crate.
- When your dog starts to check the crate for goodies, or begins to enter the crate on his own hold the treat in one hand, give a command (we suggest "Kennel" or "Go To Bed"), and throw the treat in the back. If he runs in praise him and let him leave. Remove the top of the crate if the dog is still hesitant to enter the crate.
- The next step is to get your dog into the crate and hold on to the treat. Give your command, and if your dog goes into the crate give him the treat, praise and say "Okay" to release him when he leaves. During the next few days give your dog attention *Only when he enters the crate*. Ignore him otherwise. He should enter the crate without hesitation before you move to the next step.
- If you have removed the top and/or the door of the crate, put them on again. Give the command for the dog to into his crate give him a goodie, and close the door briefly while praising him. Open the door and give your release command, "Okay" Make your praise loud and enthusiastic while your dog is in the crate and ignore him when he leaves. Gradually work up to 30 seconds with the door closed, then one-minute and so on. You should stay near the crate and talk to your dog gently as you increase the amount of time he is

in the crate with the door closed. If he enters the crate on his own give him a treat and praise. Always release your dog from the crate with "Okay".

- Introduction a special (indestructible) toy that your dog gets only while in the crate and a Gumma bone or a Nylabone for him to chew on. Gradually increase the amount of time that he spends in the crate while you are home in two to five increments. Repeat several times a day. You can put a washable blanket or towel in the crate for the dog to sleep on. Pads made especially for crates are also available (young puppies may tear them up, however)
- When he is comfortable and quite in the crate for 30 minutes at a time in your presence begin to leave the house for short periods. Put the crate in a quiet room. Close the drapes, and put your dog in the crate. He should be exercised, tied and empty (never confine a dog without your dog without and fanfare. If the dog is crying howling or barking when you return, rap on the crate and growl "Quite" Let the dog out as soon as he is quiet for a few seconds. Repeat the process the next time your dog gets sleepy. Gradually increase the amount of time you are gone in 5-10 minutes segments.
- As a general rule, young puppies should be crated for only short periods of time for, approximately the number of hours equal to their age in months (4 months=4 hours).
- Keep the crate in a quiet area where your dog will not be disturbed if he wants to retreat to it. Check to be sure that area is free from drafts and not too hot.
- Do not leave food in the crate for your dog during the day, as this will stimulate his digestive tract. During hot days a water bottle (such as one used for rabbits) can be attached to the outside of the crate to provide access to water if needed.

To use the crate for housetraining

Now you can begin to use the crate as a training tool. Your puppy should be confined in the crate when he cannot be watched. For example, while you are watching TV, preparing meals, or otherwise occupied. Set a timer to remind you to take your puppy out to his potty area on a regular basis you can start with one-hour intervals and keep track of the times your puppy eliminates to determine his schedule. Puppies will naturally need to eliminate shortly after eating or drinking after hard play. After petting or just after walking.

Put the puppy on the leash and go with him to the selected potty area. Use a command such as "Get Busy" or "Hurry up" to teach the puppy to eliminate on command. Quietly repeat the command and praise gently when he is eliminating. If he eliminates, he can be given 20-30 minutes of supervised playtime or a walk as a reward. If he doesn't eliminate, put him back into the crate for 10 to 15 minutes, then repeat process. Under no circumstances should the puppy have freedom in the house if he has not eliminated first. If he is left unsupervised, he may choose his own (inside) area to relieve himself.

Place the crate in the bedroom at night for your puppy to sleep in. If he cries when he is put into the crate, rap the crate sharply and say, "Quiet." Repeat two or three times if necessary. If he doesn't settle down and go to sleep he is not yet ready to be crated at night - go back a few steps until he is. You should not let him out or talk to him when he cries, because you are rewarding the crying. If he sleeps and then wakes up whimpering take him out to his potty area (if you remove food and water in the evening he should sleep through most of the nights)