

Crate Training Your Dog

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Crate training is NOT cruel!

Many people feel that locking your dog up in a crate is cruel, but what is being confined to a small space didn't make you feel uncomfortable, but rather made you feel secure and safe? Believe it or not, dogs instinctively seek out tight space. This area soothes them as well as diminishes the area they feel they need to protect. Many dogs make their own crates by crawling under coffee tables, desks and beds. It is not their cage, it is their den, and every dog needs a den. Training your dog to use a crate is *not* cruel and unusual punishment! Quite the contrary; when crate trained *properly* before long he or she will consider the crate as a "den" and go there automatically when they are tired or just want to be alone.

Why crate train?

Crate training is one of the most efficient and effective ways to train and housebreak a dog. The single most important aspect of training is that you reward and praise your dog each and every time she does the right thing. For example: praise her when she chews her own toys instead of the couch or eliminates outside instead of in the house. The more time you spend with your dog, the quicker and easier it will be to train her.

It is important that you make provisions for your dog when you are not home. Until your dog is housetrained, she should not be allowed free run of your house. Otherwise, she will develop a habit of leaving piles and puddles anywhere and everywhere, chewing your furniture, shoes, carpeting and destroying everything she can get her mouth or claws into.

Why can't I just put my dog...

Many people, when they leave home, confine their new dog to the yard, a bathroom, kitchen, or a laundry room. This is counterproductive for many reasons. First, the dog is not used to spending time in that place. It is filled with unfamiliar and uncomfortable smells. They do not associate you with that room, but rather the fact that you are leaving. This may lead to separation anxiety in the future. Second, the floor surface is uncomfortable and there is no traction available, making the dog more nervous. Also, the environment is much too large to create the "den" environment that dogs need to feel comfortable. Lastly, these places are seldom where you are when you're home, therefore the dog will not willingly go there and use that as a "safe place" when they are nervous.

A few basic rules of thumb:

1. A crate should never be used as punishment.
2. A puppy should never be confined to a crate for longer than 1 hour for each month of age plus one (a 2 month old dog should never be in it's crate for more than 3 hours, a 3 month old dog never more than 4 hours) when you are not home.
3. **The crate should only be big enough for the dog to stand up, turn around and lie down – any bigger and the dog will use it for a rest room.** If you

- purchase a large crate that will fit your puppy when it is full grown, then you should partition off part of it so that puppy doesn't have too much room
4. Move the crate from room to room with you and allow your new dog to sleep *in the crate* in your bedroom at night. This gives them a sense of security and they will settle down much more quickly knowing you are right there.

Furnishing Your Puppy's Crate

Toys and Treats: Place your puppy's favorite toys and dog treats at the far end opposite the door opening. These toys may include the "Kong" or a ball. Toys and balls should always be inedible and large enough to prevent their being swallowed. Any fragmented toys should be removed to prevent choking and internal obstruction. You may also place a sterilized marrowbone filled with cheese or dog treats in the crate.

Water: A small hamster-type water dispenser with ice water should be attached to the crate if your puppy is to be confined for more than two hours in the crate.

Bedding: Place a towel or blanket inside the crate to create a soft, comfortable bed for the puppy. If the puppy chews the towel, remove it to prevent the pup from swallowing or choking on the pieces. Although most puppies prefer lying on soft bedding, some may prefer to rest on a hard, flat surface, and may push the towel to one end of the crate to avoid it. If the puppy urinates on the towel, remove bedding until the pup no longer eliminates in the crate.

Location of Crate

Whenever possible, place the crate near or next to you when you are home. This will encourage the pup to go inside it without his feeling lonely or isolated when you go out. When you are not home, the crate should be placed in whatever room your family spends the most time in (living room).

Introducing the Crate to Your Dog

DO NOT SHOVE THE DOG IN THE CRATE YOU JUST BOUGHT AND WALK OUT THE DOOR! In order that your puppy associate his/her kennel crate with comfort, security and enjoyment, please follow these guidelines:

1. Introduce the dog to the crate GRADUALLY! Start on a Friday night and finish by Monday morning before you leave for work.
2. Occasionally throughout the day, drop small pieces of kibble or dog biscuits in the crate. While investigating his new crate, the pup will discover edible treasures, thereby reinforcing his positive associations with the crate. You will also feed him

in the crate to create the same effect. If the dog hesitates, it often works to feed him in front of the crate, then right inside the doorway and then, finally, in the back of the crate.

3. In the beginning, praise and pet your pup when he enters the crate. Do not try to push, pull or force the puppy into the crate. At this early stage of introduction only inductive methods are suggested. Use as treat to lure him into the crate, give him another treat once he is in the crate. Do not close the door. Do this several times throughout the day. If you try to do it only when you're going to lock the door, the puppy will get wise and not enter at all. Overnight exception: You may need to place your pup in his crate and shut the door upon retiring. (In most cases, the crate should be placed next to your bed overnight.)
4. You may also play this enjoyable and educational game with your pup or dog: without alerting your puppy, drop a small dog biscuit into the crate. Then call your puppy and say to him, "Where's the biscuit? It's in your room." Using only a friendly, encouraging voice, direct your pup toward his crate. When the puppy discovers the treat, give enthusiastic praise. The biscuit will automatically serve as a primary reward. Your pup should be free to leave its crate at all times during this game. Later on, your puppy's toy or ball can be substituted for the treat.
5. It is advisable first to crate your pup for short periods of time **while you are home with him**. In fact, crate training is best accomplished while you are in the room with your dog. Getting him used to your absence from the room in which he is crated is a good first step. This prevents an association being made with the crate and you're leaving him/her alone.

Important Reminders

1. **Warm Weather:** Do not crate a puppy or dog when temperatures reach an uncomfortable level. This is especially true for the short-muzzled (Pugs, Pekingese, Boxers, Bulldogs, etc.) and the Arctic or thick-coated breeds (Malamutes, Huskies, Akitas, Newfoundlands, etc.). Cold water should always be available to puppies, especially during warm weather. [Never leave an unsupervised dog on a terrace, roof or inside a car during warm weather. Also, keep outdoor exercise periods brief until the hot weather subsides.]
2. Be certain that your puppy has fully eliminated shortly before being crated. Be sure that the crate you are using is not too large to discourage your pup from eliminating in it. Rarely does a pup or dog eliminate in the crate if it is properly sized and the dog is an appropriate age to be crated a given amount of time. If your pup/dog continues to eliminate in the crate, the following may be the causes:

- a. The pup is too young to have much control.
- b. The pup has a poor or rich diet, or very large meals.
- c. The pup did not eliminate prior to being confined.
- d. The pup has worms.
- e. The pup has gaseous or loose stools.
- f. The pup drank large amounts of water prior to being crated.
- g. The pup has been forced to eliminate in small confined areas prior to crate training.
- h. The pup/dog is suffering from a health condition or illness (i.e., bladder infection, prostate problem, etc.)
- i. The puppy or dog is experiencing severe separation anxiety when left alone.

Note: Puppies purchased in pet stores, or puppies which were kept solely in small cages or other similar enclosures at a young age (between approximately 7 and 16 weeks of age), may be considerably harder to housebreak using the crate training method due to their having been forced to eliminate in their sleeping area during this formative stage of development. This is the time when most puppies are learning to eliminate outside their sleeping area. Confining them with their waste products retards the housebreaking process, and this problem can continue throughout a dog's adult life.

Accidents In The Crate

If your puppy messes in his crate while you are out, do not punish him upon your return. Wash out the crate using a pet odor neutralizer (such as Nature's Miracle). **Do not** use ammonia-based products, as their odor resembles urine and may draw your dog back to urinate in the same spot again.

Crating Duration Guidelines

Age of dog	Time in crate
9-10 Weeks	Approx. 30-60 minutes
11-14 Weeks	Approx. 1-4hours
15-16 Weeks	Approx. 4-6ours

17 + Weeks

Approx. 6+ (8 hours maximum)

*NOTE: Except for overnight, neither puppies nor dogs should be crated for more than 8 hours at a time. (8 hours maximum!)

The Crate As Punishment

NEVER use the crate as a form of punishment or reprimand for your puppy or dog. This simply causes the dog to fear and resent the crate. If correctly introduced to his crate, your puppy should be happy to go into his crate at any time. You may however use the crate as a brief time-out for your puppy as a way of discouraging nipping or excessive rowdiness.

[NOTE: Sufficient daily exercise is important for healthy puppies and dogs. Regular daily walks should be offered as soon as a puppy is fully immunized. Backyard exercise is not enough!]

Children And The Crate

Do not allow children to handle your dog while he/she is in the crate. The crate is your dog's private sanctuary. His/her rights to privacy should always be respected.

Barking In The Crate

In most cases a pup that cries incessantly in his crate has either been crated too soon (without taking the proper steps as outlined above) or is suffering from separation anxiety and is anxious about being left alone. Some pups may simply need more exercise. Others may not have enough attention paid them. Some breeds of dog may be particularly vocal (e.g., Miniature Pinchers, Mini Schnauzers, and other frisky terrier types). You may need to increase the amount of exercise and play your dog receives daily.

When Not To Use A Crate

Do not crate your puppy or dog if:

- s/he is too young to have sufficient bladder or sphincter control.
- s/he has diarrhea. Diarrhea can be caused by: worms, illness, intestinal upsets such as colitis, too much and/or the wrong kinds of food, quick changes in the dogs diet, or stress, fear or anxiety.
- s/he is vomiting.

- you must leave him/her crated for more than the Crating Duration Guidelines suggest.
- s/he has not eliminated shortly before being placed inside the crate. (See Housetraining Guidelines for exceptions.)
- the temperature is excessively high.
- s/he has not had sufficient exercise, companionship and socialization.

The Cost of A Crate

Crates can cost between \$35 and \$150 depending on the size and the type of crate and the source.

The Cost of Not Buying a Crate

The cost of not using a crate:

- Vet bills for things ingested by the dog
- Your shoes
- Books
- Table legs
- Chairs and sofas
- Throw rugs and carpet, and
- Electric, telephone and computer wires.

The real cost, however, is your dog's safety and your peace of mind.



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(310) 519-8221