



CRATE TRAINING YOUR PUPPY

Benefits of Crate Training

There are a lot of good reasons for crate training. For one, it is an essential part of housebreaking. Puppies will not usually soil their bed. Therefore, if the crate is set up as a resting space, the puppy will wait until he leaves the crate to do his business. This will put you in control of where and when your puppy relieves himself.

You will find that the crate is also useful for sequestering the dog when you have company over, car travel, and for making sure that the puppy is safe at night -- i.e., not eating thing left within reach, tearing at furniture, or soiling on the floors. Think of the crate as a little cave in which your puppy can feel safe and secure, and he will respond positively to it.

Making Crate Training a Pleasant Experience

To avoid making crate training a traumatic experience for the puppy, make sure that he feels at ease throughout the entire process. You can do this by placing an old shirt or blanket on the bottom of the crate so that he is comfortable.

A puppy must never be locked up and left alone if it is his first time inside the crate. This can be a very traumatic experience for your puppy and will only make it more difficult for you the next time you try and get him to go inside the crate and behave.

Instead, tempt the puppy to enter the crate by placing some kibble inside. Be generous with your praises, as he enters the crate to eat the kibble. If he does not make a move to enter the crate, pick him up and slowly put him inside with the door left open. Reassure your puppy by petting him if he seems agitated and frightened. Once the puppy is inside the crate for a few moments, call him to come out of the crate to join you. Praise him with simple words and pats when he comes to you.

After practicing going in and out of the crate willingly several times, once the puppy appears to be at ease inside the crate and does not show any signs of fright, then you can close the door slowly. Keep it closed for one minute, as long as he remains calm all throughout. After that, open the door and invite him out while generously praising him.

What if He Whines?

Once you have passed the initial hurdle of familiarizing your puppy with the crate, you will want to get him comfortable to going into the crate and staying there quietly. Similar to before, the best trick for getting a puppy to go inside a crate willingly is to tempt him with food. Fill a bowl with a small amount of puppy food while you let him watch. Let him sniff the food and then slowly place the bowl of food inside the crate.

Once the puppy is inside, slowly close the door (so as not to startle the puppy) and allow him to eat. He will likely finish his food inside and only begin to whine or bark after he is done with his meal. When he starts to bark and whine, tap the door of the crate and say "No" in a strong, commanding (but not loud) voice. With repetition, this will make him stop crying and eventually train him not to whine when he is placed inside his crate.

You will gradually increase the time the puppy stays inside the crate. If he whines, wait for him to quiet down -- or five minutes, whichever is first -- before you open the door to let him out. Praise him when he comes out, and take him outside to relieve himself immediately. Repeat this a few times a day.

After some time, your puppy will begin to feel at ease inside his crate and may even go to his crate on his own. This is the time to lengthen his stay inside, although you must keep in mind that there is also a limit to the maximum number of hours that your puppy can spend inside his crate before becoming uncomfortable.

A puppy should not be made to spend almost an entire day in his crate, nor is it right to imprison a puppy inside his crate for long periods of time. He must be given breaks to walk and play around.

The purpose of a crate is so that the puppy/dog can be tucked inside overnight when you are sleeping and cannot supervise him, when you need to travel, and when you need him to be sequestered from visitors or children. It can also be a very useful tool in housetraining. You can keep him inside his crate until the scheduled outside time -- when you can take him out to relieve himself -- and in so doing, the puppy learns how to control his body functions as an internal schedule is being set, so that he becomes accustomed to the times when he will be going outdoors. This method works well because it is a dog's natural inclination not to soil in his own bedding. He will learn not to eliminate until he is let out of his crate, and later, at the scheduled time.

Accidents In The Crate

If your puppy messes in his crate while you are out, do not punish him upon your return. Simply wash out the crate using a pet odor neutralizer (such as Nature's Miracle, Nilodor, or Outright). 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

9-10 Weeks Approx. 30-60 minutes

11-14 Weeks Approx. 1-3 hours

15-16 Weeks Approx. 3-4 hours

17 + Weeks Approx. 4+ (6 hours maximum)

*NOTE: Except for overnight, neither puppies nor dogs should be crated for more than 5 hours at a time. (6 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 play in your dog's crate or 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 who 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 under exercised. 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). These dogs may need the "Alternate Method of Confining Your Dog", along with increasing 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 Not Using A Crate

- your shoes
- bookstable
- legs;chairs and sofas;
- throw rugs and carpet
- electric, telephone and computer wires.

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