



Crate Training Your Dog

Why Should I Confine My Dog?

Dogs are highly social animals that make wonderful pets; however, with the lifestyle and schedule of the majority of families, dogs must learn to spend a portion of the day alone at home while their human family is away. During those times when you are unavailable to supervise your pet, they may still feel the need to chew, play, explore, eat or eliminate. These behaviors can be very distressing and damage your home as well as be dangerous for your dog. Training the dog to spend time in a crate will prevent these activities and give your dog a sense of place.

Dogs see crates as a room/house of their very own. When properly introduced and utilized it helps satisfy your dog's den instinct. It will help him housetrain easier and quicker. It will reduce your dog's stress and anxiety if boarding and when travelling.

Where Do I Start?

1. Obtain a crate. A metal, collapsible crate with a tray floor or a plastic traveling crate will both work; as long as the crate is large enough for the dog to stand, turn, and stretch out. Some dogs feel more secure if a blanket is draped over 3 sides of the crate.
2. Place the crate in a room where the family spends time such as a kitchen, den, or in a bedroom where the dog might sleep at night.

How Do I Crate Train My Dog?

1. Introduce the dog to the crate as soon as it is brought home and as early in the day as possible. Place a variety of treats in the cage throughout the day so that the puppy is encouraged to enter voluntarily.
2. If the puppy is tired and calm, it may take a "nap" shortly after being placed in its crate. If not, be certain to provide a few novel and stimulation toys or chews for play. In this way, the crate serves two functions – your puppy's bed or your dog's play area.
3. Leave the room but remain close enough to hear the puppy. Escape behavior and vocalization (crying, whimpering or barking) are to be expected when a dog is first placed in its crate. Ignore your dog until the crying stops; never release the dog unless it is quiet.
4. A brief disruption may be useful to deter crying if it does not subside on its own. A shaker can (a sealed can filled with coins or marbles) can be tossed at the crate when the pup barks. When the barking ceases, stop the disruption.
5. When your dog is calm and quiet you can take it out and reward it with treats and play time.
6. Repeat the cage and release procedure a few more times during the day; including each naptime and each time your dog is given a toy or chew with which to play. Each time, increase the time the dog must stay in the crate before letting it out. Always give the dog exercise and a chance to eliminate before securing it in the crate.

7. At bedtime, the dog should be exercised, secured in its crate, and left for the night. Do not go to the dog if it cries. Never leave the puppy in its crate for longer than it can control in bowels or bladder.
8. Remember to positively reinforce your dog's calmed behavior in the crate and provide it with stimulation (i.e., chew toys) while inside.
9. If your dog is still agitated in the crate after following these guidelines, stop training and consult your veterinary office for additional help.

Some dogs require more time and patience to create a positive crate training environment. You can set up the crate in the dog's feeding area with the door open for a few days. Put food, treats, and water in the crate so that the dog enters the crate on its own. Once the dog is regularly entering the crate freely, begin closing the door for very short periods of time. Then continue through the steps listed above.

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