

Crate training is NOT cruel!

Some people believe that putting their dog in a crate is cruel, but that really isn't true. Dogs instinctively seek small spaces that make them feel comfortable and safe. You may have noticed a dog making their own "crate," by crawling beneath a coffee table, or under a desk or bed. Putting a dog in a crate is not putting them in a cage, but helping them create their own "den." Being in their crate or den often soothes them. It has been said that every dog needs a den. This may well become the place to which your dog goes when they are tired or simply 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.

Basic Rules of Thumb

1. A crate should **NEVER** be used for punishment.
2. The crate should only be big enough for the dog to stand up, turn around and lie down. If the crate is bigger than that, the dog will use it for a rest room.
3. IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT YOUR DOG COMPLETELY TAKES CARE OF THEIR BATHROOM BUSINESS SHORTLY BEFORE BEING CRATED.
4. If you purchase a large crate that will continue to serve your dog as they grow, partition it so that the puppy has the amount of space indicated above.
5. During the day, if you are at home, move the empty crate with you from room to room. Your new dog will then be able to use it if they wish, with you in close proximity. At night, allow your new dog to sleep in the crate in your bedroom. This will give them a sense of security. Knowing that you are near likely will enable them to settle down more quickly. When you leave the house and your new dog remains at home, put the dog in the crate in the room where your family spends the most time with your dog.
6. If your puppy poops and/or pees in their crate while you are away, do not punish them. Wash out the crate using a pet odor neutralizer. DO NOT use ammonia-based products, since their odor resembles the smell of urine and your dog may be drawn back to pee in the same spot again.

A Special Note on House Training Your Pup:

Puppies that were kept in small enclosures from an early age may be more difficult to house train using the crate method. This is because they were forced to use their living space as their rest room, when they should have been learning to use the rest room outside the place where they were sleeping. In house training your puppy, it is important to take them out to do their bathroom business first thing in the morning, after every meal, occasionally throughout the day if this is possible, and the last thing at night before they go to bed.

Furnishing Your Puppy's Crate

Toys and Treats: Place your puppy's favorite toys and dog treats at the far end of the crate opposite the door opening. These toys may include a "Kong" or a ball. Toys and balls should always be inedible and large enough to prevent their being swallowed. Any toy that begins to come apart should be removed immediately 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 or the bedding, 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 and out of their way. If the puppy pees or poops on the towel or bedding, remove the towel or bedding until the pup no longer uses the crate as a rest room.

Introducing Your Dog To Their Crate

So that your puppy will connect their crate with comfort, security and enjoyment, we suggest the following guidelines.

1. Introduce your dog to the crate gradually. For example, start the process on a Friday evening and complete it by Monday morning when you need to leave for work.
2. Occasionally, throughout the day, drop small treats into the crate. While exploring their new crate, your pup will discover these treats and begin to connect their crate with a pleasant experience. As well, feed your pup in their crate to reinforce this experience. If your dog is hesitant to enter the crate for their food, begin by feeding them just outside the entrance to the crate, then just inside the crate, and finally at the back of the crate.
3. In the beginning, praise and pet your pup when they enter the crate. Do not push or pull or force the pup into their crate. At night, when the crate is placed near you in your bedroom, it may be necessary, initially, to carefully place your pup in their crate.
4. Do not allow children to handle your dog when they are in their crate. The crate is your dog's sanctuary, and their privacy in this space should be respected.
5. In most cases, a pup that continually cries in their crate likely has been crated too soon, that is, without following the steps outlined above, or is suffering from separation anxiety. In some cases, your pup may need more exercise, or he or she may need more attention than they have been given. Increasing exercise and the time you spend with your pup may alleviate this problem.

Crate Duration Guidelines

Age of dog Time in crate (approximately)

9-10 weeks 30 – 60 minutes

11-14 weeks 1 – 4 hours

15-16 weeks 4 – 6 hours

17+ weeks 6 – 8 hours