

Crate-Training Your Dog

Owners may be unsure whether they should crate-train their puppies or newly adopted dogs or whether to simply confine them in a dog-proofed area when gone. Here is some information to help you decide:

Crate training uses a dog's natural instincts as a den animal. A wild dog's den is his home, a place to sleep, hide from danger, and raise a family. Crate training helps with the following:

- **Housetraining:** Prompts the dog to hold bladder and bowels when unsupervised to expedite housetraining
- **Future confinement:** Dogs that are used to close confinement are less likely to be stressed when caged during a hospital stay or travel



Crating Caution:

A crate isn't a magical solution. If not used correctly, a dog can feel trapped and frustrated.

- **Never use the crate as punishment.** Your dog will come to fear it and refuse to enter it.
- Don't leave your dog in the crate too long. A dog that's crated day and night doesn't get enough exercise or human interaction and can become depressed or anxious. You may have to change your schedule, hire a pet sitter, or take your dog to a doggie daycare facility to reduce the amount of time he must spend in his crate every day.
- Puppies under six months of age shouldn't stay in a crate for more than 3 hours at a time. The same goes for adult dogs that are being housetrained. No dog should spend more than 5 hours crated.

The Crate Training Process

Training should take place in a series of small steps - don't go too fast!

- Choose the proper size crate: it should allow enough room for standing, sitting, and stretching out, but you don't want the crate to be so big that your dog has enough room to soil in it

Make the crate comfortable. Find an old blanket or towel to fold up and place on the floor of the crate. If your dog already has a bed that they're accustomed to, you can use that too. The idea here is not only to create a comfortable place for your dog to lie, but also to remind your dog that the crate is for sleeping and comfort, not for going to the bathroom.

- If your dog soils the bedding, be sure to remove it as quickly as possible to avoid it happening again. Not only will a pee-soaked towel stink, it will encourage your dog to use the area as a bathroom again.

Make the crate appealing. Keep the crate in a high-traffic area. By keeping the crate in an area with a lot of people, such as a living room or kitchen, your dog will associate the crate with being surrounded by people rather than completely lonely and isolated.

- Allow the crate to sit there for a little while before you ask your dog to go into it.
- Use positive reinforcement. Praise your dog every time you see him enter the crate and toss treats into and around it to build his positive association. While exploring the room and new object, your puppy will begin to associate it with delicious treats.
- Never try to push, pull, or force your puppy into the crate.

Feed your dog in the crate. Once your dog is comfortable entering the crate, begin feeding meals in the crate. Proceed to shutting the door after a few times.

- If your dog starts to whine, you've increased the time too quickly. Leave the door closed for a shorter amount of time next time. Remember not to let your dog out while he is whining, or he will cry and whine every time he wants to be let out.
- Lengthen the crating periods. After your dog is eating his regular meals in the crate with no sign of fear or anxiety, you can confine him there for short time periods while you're home.
- Once your dog will stay quietly in the crate for about 30 minutes with you mostly out of sight, you can begin leaving him crated when you're gone for short time periods.

When you return home keep arrivals low key to avoid increasing his anxiety over when you will return. Continue to crate your dog for short periods from time to time when you're home so he doesn't associate crating with being left alone.

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