

Proper Kennel Crate Training

Introduction

Providing your puppy or dog with an indoor kennel crate can satisfy many dogs' need for a den-like enclosure. Besides being an effective housebreaking tool, because it takes advantage of the dog's natural reluctance to soil its sleeping place, it can also help to reduce separation anxiety; prevent destructive behaviour, such as chewing furniture; keep a puppy away from potentially dangerous household items, i.e., poisons, electrical wires, etc.; and serve as a mobile indoor dog house that can be moved from room to room whenever necessary.

A kennel crate also serves as a travel cabin for your dog when travelling by car or plane. Additionally, most hotels that accept dogs on their premises require them to be crated while in the room to prevent damage to hotel furniture and rugs. More importantly, having your dog crated while travelling ensures your dog's safety in a strange and foreign environment.

Most dogs that have been introduced to the kennel crate while still young grow up to prefer their crate to rest or "hang-out" in; therefore, a crate, or any other area of confinement, should NEVER be used for the purpose of punishment.

We recommend that you provide a kennel crate throughout your dog's lifetime. Some crates allow for the removal of the door once it is no longer necessary for the purpose of training. The crate can be placed under a table, or a tabletop can be put on top of it to make it both unobtrusive and useful.

Preparing the Crate for Initial Use

Vari-Kennel type: Take the crate apart, removing the screws, the top and the door. Allow your pup to go in and out of the bottom half of the crate before attaching the top half. This stage can require anywhere from several hours to a few days. This step can be omitted in the case of a young puppy that accepts crating right away.

Wire Mesh type: Tie the crate door back so that it stays open without moving or swinging closed. If the crate comes with a floor pan, place a piece of cardboard or a towel between the floor (or crate bottom) and the floor pan in order to keep it from rattling.

Furnishing the Crate

Toys and Treats: Place one or two of your puppy's favourite toys and dog treats at the far end opposite the door opening. These toys may include the "Tuffy", "Billy", "Kong", "Nylabone" 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.

Bedding: Place a towel or blanket inside the crate to create a soft, comfortable bed for the puppy. If the puppy chews 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 bedding to one end of the crate to avoid it. If the puppy urinates on the bedding, remove it 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 feeling lonely or isolated when you go out. A central room in your home (i.e., living room or kitchen) or a large hallway near the entrance is a good place to crate your puppy.

Introducing the Crate to Your Puppy

In order that your puppy associates the kennel crate with comfort, security and enjoyment, please follow these guidelines:

Occasionally throughout the day, drop small pieces of kibble or dog biscuits in the crate. While investigating the new crate, the pup will discover edible treasures, thereby reinforcing his positive associations with the crate. Always 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.

In the beginning, praise and pet your pup when he enters. Do not try to push, pull or force the puppy into the crate. At this early stage of introduction only inductive methods are suggested.

Departure from Home and Overnight Exception: You may need to place your pup in his crate and shut the door upon leaving your home or retiring; however, this should still be done using a treat as an enticement. In most cases, the crate should be placed next to your bed overnight. If this is not possible, the crate can be placed in the kitchen, bathroom or living room.

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 crate/kennel." 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.

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 alone.

Do not be alarmed if your pup cries or whines while in the crate. Do your best to ignore your pup and he will settle down after a few minutes. Under no circumstances should you open the crate and remove your pup when he is whining as you have now rewarded your pup and positively reinforced the whine. If you have forgotten to potty your puppy prior to putting him into the kennel, quickly and silently, with as little interaction as possible, remove your puppy for potty, returning him to the kennel with a treat. A puppy that has been properly pottied, then crated, will only whine out of protest for a few minutes before settling down. Try to keep an eye on the crate to watch when your puppy wakes up so you can remove your puppy for potty prior to him crying.

Important Reminders

Warm Weather: Do not crate a puppy or dog when temperatures reach an uncomfortable level. 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.

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:

- The pup has been left in the crate for longer than its age capability.
- The pup has a poor or rich diet, or very large meals.
- The pup did not eliminate prior to being confined.
- The pup has worms.
- The pup has gaseous or loose stools.
- The pup drank large amounts of water prior to being crated.
- The pup/dog is suffering from a health condition or illness (i.e., bladder infection, prostate problem, etc.)
- The puppy or dog is experiencing severe separation anxiety when left alone.

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 odour neutralizer, such as Nature's Miracle. Do not use ammonia-based products, as their odour resembles urine and may draw your dog back to urinate in the same spot again.

A Note About Crating Puppies

Puppies under 4 months of age have little bladder or sphincter control. Puppies under 3 months have even less.

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)

Except for overnight, neither puppies nor dogs should be crated for more than 5 – 6 hours at a time.

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.

Children And The Crate

Do not allow children to play in your dog's crate or to handle your dog while he is in the crate. The crate is your dog's private sanctuary. His 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 be under exercised. Others may not have enough attention paid them.

When Not To Use A Crate

Do not crate your puppy or dog if your pup:

- Has diarrhoea. Diarrhoea can be caused by: worms, illness, intestinal upset such as colitis, too much and/or the wrong kinds of food, quick changes in the dogs diet, or stress, fear or anxiety;
- Is vomiting;
- You must leave him crated for more than the Crating Duration Guidelines suggest;
- has not eliminated shortly before being placed inside the crate. (See Housetraining Guidelines for exceptions);
- Has an excessively high temperature; or
- Has not had sufficient exercise, companionship and socialization.

The Cost of A Crate

Crates can cost between \$80 and \$250 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:

- your shoes
- books
- furniture
- rugs/carpets
- children's toys
- electric, telephone and computer wires.

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