

The Crate

YOUR DOG'S DEN

Crate training your dog may take some time and effort, but can be useful in a variety of situations. If you have a new dog or puppy, you can use the crate to limit his access to the house until he learns all the house rules, such as what he can and can't chew and where he can and can't eliminate.

A crate is also the safest way of transporting your dog in the car, as well as a way of taking him places where he may not be welcome to run freely. If you properly train your dog to use the crate, he will think of it as his safe place and will be happy to spend time there when needed.

A crated dog cannot destroy your home. He cannot chew on unacceptable or dangerous items.

A crate is a great assistance in housebreaking a puppy. A dog's natural instinct is to keep his den clean and not soil it.

Step 1: Introducing Your Dog To The Crate

- Put the crate in an area of your house where the family spends a lot of time, such as the family room. Put a soft blanket or towel in the crate. Bring your dog over to the crate and talk to him in a happy tone of voice.
- To encourage your dog to enter the crate, drop small food treats near it, then just inside the door, and finally, all the way inside the crate. If he refuses to go all the way in at first, that's okay, don't force him to enter. Continue tossing treats into the crate until your dog will walk calmly all the way into the crate to get the food. Make a game of it!

Step 2: Feeding Meals In The Crate

- After introducing your dog to the crate, begin feeding him his regular meals near the crate. This will create a pleasant association with the crate. If your dog is readily entering the crate when you begin Step 2, put the food dish all the way at the back of the crate. If your dog is still reluctant to enter the crate, put the dish only as far inside as he will readily go without becoming fearful or anxious. Each time you feed him, place the dish a little further back in the crate.

- Once your dog is standing comfortably in the crate to eat his meal, you can close the door while he's eating. At first, open the door as soon as he finishes his meal. With each successive feeding, leave the door closed a few minutes longer, until he's staying in the crate for 10 minutes or so after eating. If he begins to whine to be let out, you may have increased the length of time too quickly. Next time, try leaving him in the crate for a shorter time period. If he does whine or cry in the crate, it's imperative that you not let him out until he stops. Otherwise, he'll learn that the way to get out of the crate is to whine and he'll keep doing it.



Step 3: Conditioning For Longer Time 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. Call him over to the crate and give him a treat. Give him a command to enter, such as, "kennel up." Encourage him by pointing to the inside of the crate with a treat in your hand. After your dog enters the crate, praise him, give him the treat and close the door. Sit quietly near the crate for five to 10 minutes and then go into another room for a few minutes. Return, sit quietly again for a short time, then let him out of the crate. Once your dog will stay quietly in the crate for about 30 minutes with you out of sight the majority of the time, you can begin leaving him crated when you're gone for short time periods.

Sleeping in the Crate

From the very beginning, puppies can sleep in their crates at night next to your bed. It's much better than confining them to the kitchen where they feel insecure and may end up howling all night, keeping you awake as well. Most young puppies are able to sleep through the night in a crate provided you have taken them out to eliminate right before bed and as soon as you arise.