

**Crate Training-** the dog will enter the crate and settle without showing signs of stress, anxiety or destruction of item in the crate such as bedding. The dog will also exit the crate in a mannerly fashion.

Crate training has long been accepted by professional trainers and veterinarians as one of the quickest and least stressful ways to mold desirable behaviors in dogs. Although many new dog guardians initially reject the idea of using a crate because they consider it cruel or unfair to the dog, a crate helps satisfy the dog's instinct to be in a den while alleviating many problems dogs and their people experience.

The crate should be just large enough for a dog to stand up and turn around comfortably. The crate is a place for the dog to be when no one is around to supervise him. It is the dog's bed and sanctuary. Its purpose is to provide confinement for reasons of safety, security for the dog, housetraining, prevention of destructive behavior, and/or travel.

Why use a dog crate? Correctly & humanely used, a crate can have many advantages for both you & your dog:

You...

- Can enjoy peace of mind when leaving your dog home alone, knowing that nothing can be soiled or destroyed-and that she is comfortable, protected and not developing any bad habits.
- Can housetrain your dog quickly by using the confinement to encourage control, establish a regular routine for outdoor elimination, and prevent accidents at night or when your dog is left alone.
- Can effectively confine your dog at times when she may be under foot (i.e., when you have guests, at mealtimes), over-excited, or bothered by too much confusion or activity (such, as lots of children running around the house).
- Can travel with your dog safely and be assured that she will more easily adapt to strange surroundings as long as she has her familiar "security blanket," her crate.

Your dog...

- Can enjoy the privacy and security of a den of her own, to which she can retreat when tired, stressed or not feeling well.
- Can avoid much of the fear, confusion and anxiety caused by your reaction to problem behavior.
- Can more easily learn to control her bowels and to associate elimination only with the outdoors.
- Can be spared the loneliness and frustration of having to be isolated, in the basement or outdoors, from indoor family surroundings when she needs to be restricted from certain things.
- Can be more conveniently included in family outings and trips instead of being left behind alone.

## **How To Crate Train Your Dog**

The crate training process Crate training can take days or weeks, depending on your dog's age, temperament and past experiences. It's important to keep two things in mind while crate training. The crate should always be associated with something pleasant, and training should take place in a series of small steps - don't go too fast.

### **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. Make sure the crate door is securely fastened open, so it won't hit your dog and frighten him. To encourage your dog to enter the crate, drop some 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. If he isn't interested in treats, try tossing a favorite toy in the crate. This step may take a few minutes or as long as several days.

### **Step 2: Feeding your dog his 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, so he'll keep doing it.

### **Step 3: Conditioning your dog to the crate for longer time periods**

Once the 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. Repeat this process several times. With each repetition, gradually increase the length of time you leave him in the crate and the length of time you're out of his sight. 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 and/or letting him sleep there at night. This may take several days or several weeks.

#### **Step 4: Part A: Crating your dog when left alone**

After your dog is spending about 30 minutes in the crate without becoming anxious or afraid, you can begin leaving him crated for short periods when you leave the house. Put him in the crate using your regular command and a treat. You might also want to leave him with a few safe toys in the crate.

You'll want to vary at what point in your "getting ready to leave" routine you put your dog in the crate. Although he shouldn't be crated for a long time before you leave, you can crate him anywhere from five to 20 minutes prior to leaving. Don't make your departures emotional and prolonged, but matter-of-fact. Praise your dog briefly, give him a treat for entering the crate and then leave quietly.

When you return home, don't reward your dog for excited behavior by responding to him in an excited, enthusiastic way. Keep arrivals low key. 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. Your dog should not be left alone in the crate for more than four to five hours at a time during the day.

#### **Part B: Crating your dog at night**

Put your dog in the crate using your regular command and a treat. Initially, it may be a good idea to put the crate in your bedroom or nearby in a hallway, especially if you have a puppy. Puppies often need to go outside to eliminate during the night, and you'll want to be able to hear your puppy when he whines to be let outside. Older dogs, too, should initially be kept nearby so that crating doesn't become associated with social isolation. Once your dog is sleeping comfortably through the night with his crate near you, you can begin to gradually move it to the location you prefer.

#### **Potential problems:**

- **Too much time in the crate:** A crate isn't a magical solution. If not used correctly, a dog can feel trapped and frustrated. For example, if your dog is crated all day while you're at work and then crated again all night, he's spending too much time in too small a space. Other arrangements should be made to accommodate his physical and emotional needs. Also remember that puppies under six months of age shouldn't stay in a crate for more than three or four hours at a time. They can't control their bladders and bowels for longer periods.

- **Whining:** If the dog whines or cries while in the crate at night, it may be difficult to decide whether he's whining to be let out of the crate, or whether he needs to be let outside to eliminate. If you followed the training procedures outlined above, your dog hasn't been rewarded for whining in the past by being released from his crate. Try to ignore the whining. If your dog is just testing you, he'll probably stop whining soon. Yelling at him or pounding on the crate will only make things worse.

If the whining continues after you've ignored him for several minutes, use the phrase he associates with going outside to eliminate. If he responds and becomes excited, take him outside. This should be a trip with a purpose, not play time. If you're convinced that your dog doesn't need to eliminate, the best response is to ignore him until he stops whining. Don't give in, otherwise you'll teach your dog to whine loudly to get what he wants.

- **Separation anxiety:** Attempting to use the crate as a remedy for separation anxiety won't solve the problem. A crate may prevent your dog from being destructive, but he may injure himself in an attempt to escape from the crate. Separation anxiety problems can only be resolved with counter-conditioning and desensitization procedures.