

CRATE TRAINING A DOG OR PUPPY

A crate, also called a cage or kennel, is a small enclosure made of wire or solid material such as wood or fiberglass, large enough for the dog to lie down, stand up, turn around, period. The dog views the crate the way a wolf views a den - a safe haven in which to rest, undisturbed. Once accustomed to it, dogs often seek out their crates and don't mind getting into them.

Crate training eases housetraining, eliminates destructive chewing, is a secure place to keep a dog who is left alone or cannot be supervised, and is a safe way for a dog to travel. Crate trained dogs stress less if they have to stay at the vet's, where they will be in a crate.

We remember the first time someone suggested crating our dog, a destructive chewer. We were horrified, thinking it cruel to "cage" her. We didn't consider how cruel it was to be angry at her about the destruction-of-the-day, causing her anxiety and distress. She didn't think crating was cruel. She sought out her crate to rest. We were slower to learn the value of the crate and of crating a dog than she was.

The following are recommendations and steps for crate training a puppy or dog-

Recommendations:

- Always click or praise your dog (and give a treat) for getting in the crate when you are getting him used to it. Once trained, give him a treat occasionally.
 - Show no apprehension or apology for putting the dog in the crate. It's no big deal for a dog. Think that way, and he will, too.
 - Avoid putting him in it angrily, or while you are chastising him. He will associate your anger with the crate.
 - If he's barking in the crate, make him be quiet before letting him out. (Sometimes you may have to drape a towel or cover over the crate until he gets quiet. Immediately praise him when he gets quiet and let him out.)
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- If your dog urinates or defecates in the crate, don't chastise him. Simply take him out, and clean the crate.

The Steps to Crate Training:

1) Place the crate in an area you use frequently, such as the kitchen or family room. Allow your dog to explore it on his own, inside and out. Encourage him to investigate it. Rattle it, to show him that it may make a noise. Talk happily and laugh, showing no concern.

2) Throw some treats toward the rear of the kennel, give your dog a cue such as "kennel" or "go to bed," entice him into the crate, praise as he's eating the treats. If he gets right out again, that's OK.

If he is reluctant to get in, put a treat just inside the door, then a little further in, a little further, etc. until he gets in on his own. if necessary, put him in, give him a treat, and immediately let him come out again. Repeat this a few times, giving him a treat each time until he gets in on his own.

3) Command him in and treat, and close the door. Scratch him through the bars, with praise, then let him out. Don't make a fuss over his coming out. Make a bigger fuss about his being in the crate.

4) Command him in, treat, close the door and leave the room for 5 seconds. Return, praise him for being quiet, open the door and let him out. Repeat, gradually increasing the time in 10 second increments.

5) When you have increased the time your dog is crated, you can crate him when you leave the house. Don't make a big issue out of it. Act as you did when you left the room. No teary good-byes. Just leave.

6) (Optional) Feed dog in the crate. Prepare his meal, take it to the crate, command him in, put the dish in, close the door and walk away. When he's done eating, let him out.

7) (Optional -- important with puppies) Have the crate by your bed, and put your puppy in it to sleep. When a young puppy wakes during the night, carry him out, wait until he urinates or defecates, take him back to the crate and both of you go back to sleep.

(For additional help with training your dog; Contact Joyce Burgess, 828-505-0161