

Crate Training A Puppy Or Dog

(AKA House Training, Potty Training, Toilet Training, etc.)



By

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Many people, who unfortunately misunderstand the concept of good crate training, believe that crating a dog for any length of time is cruel and they refuse to even consider it. In fact, a crate really is a wonderful tool when used correctly. Crate training can be fun for the puppy if you make it a POSITIVE experience. I firmly believe it to be the fastest and easiest way to potty train a puppy or even an adult, previously untrained dog.

The majority of new pet owners misconstrue the purpose of a dog crate. It is NOT used to punish a puppy; the puppy should deem the crate to be his safe haven. Once you recognize this fact, you will be able to utilize the puppy's den to your advantage and build up a proper potty training plan.

When you have a new puppy or dog, you will use a crate to limit his admission to the entire house until he learns all the house rules. A crate is also a secure way of transporting your dog in the car, as well as an opportunity to take him places where it may not be appropriate for him to run without restraint.



Giving the pup special "treats" is a perfect way to introduce him to his crate. The only time the puppy receives these special treats is when he is in the crate; the treats become associated with the crate. Thus, when introduced and used correctly, your dog will think of his crate as his safe haven and he will be happy to spend time there when required. Basically, you need to think like a dog for this to work: normally, a dog never chooses a busy part of the house for

his hideaway. He usually selects a dark corner off by himself where he feels sheltered and safe; maybe under a table or chair or between furniture where he is able to see anyone approaching. So, use this concept to your advantage, now that you understand the dog's purpose for the crate is that it becomes his "den" you can move forward. Remember though, repetition is essential. Your puppy will not understand what you want unless you repeatedly show him exactly what is required of him.

A dog will never make his den dirty. If a dog is correctly trained to love his den, his instinct will be to keep it clean. This is the foremost reason why a crate works in potty training. A dog should always be at ease and safe in his crate and above all he always

desires to have a clean environment. A crate must be a positive place where your dog can find security and pleasure. An attractive crate makes for a welcoming den - a comfy blanket, tasty treats, and a favorite toy help to make the pup comfortable. Also very important, the crate needs to be in a place where your dog will not feel as if he is part of the family and not isolated.

Always feed the pup/dog's regular meals somewhere close to his crate. This will also create a pleasant association with the crate. Some trainers recommend actually feeding meals inside the crate; this too is fine, but my personal preference is to keep food dishes outside. An exception to this could be with a adult dog who initially views the crate negatively; placing meals inside the crate will be a great encouragement to him accepting it. After the dog is eating his regular meals in the crate with no sign of fear or anxiety, begin moving the dishes outside.



To sum up: using a crate correctly, establishes restrictions for your dog when you are away from the house and unable to keep an eye on his behavior. A crate is also a safe area for your dog to be if you're having company and you have a less than social dog.

Another surprising advantage: dogs who are afraid of thunderstorms or fireworks, often find refuge in their familiar crate/den.

Normally a puppy follows a very definite "potty pattern": when he wakes up in the morning; immediately after meal; when he wakes up from a nap; after he has been playing, or after it has been a while since he last went potty. At each of these strategic points, take the puppy outside to take care of his business. A puppy cannot hold it a long time so you must be trained to anticipate his likely needs. Look at it this way, you need to understand that the better trained you become, the better trained your puppy will be.

The last two dogs I have crate trained personally were a six week old female Dalmatian puppy and an adult rescued (badly abused) female Dalmatian. I began the baby in a comfortable, plastic travel crate, while the adult dog was put in a much larger, fold down wire crate. Both crates were situated in the kitchen/dining room which is the most occupied area of the house.

With both dogs, the following schedule was set up and followed faithfully:

Early Morning: Puppy/dog woke up in her crate; I immediately took the puppy/dog outside to the part of the yard we had designated as her "potty area". Right from the start I began repeating "Quickly, quickly, quickly", so that she would straight away associate the command with going to potty. Immediately she obliged, I praised her both verbally and with lots of pats. We then returned to the house and the puppy was given breakfast and the adult dog was given a biscuit. After breakfast we both went back outside for the puppy to go potty while the adult dog went for a walk. Both dogs were then allowed to play safely for a while in the house, then back outside, potty, praise, return into the house, and naptime in the crate.

Afternoon: Puppy/dog woke up again; time to go outside. I immediately began repeating "Quickly, quickly, quickly", and pretty soon both animals obliged almost instantly and they were rewarded with lots of praise. Back into the house for lunch. Puppy/dog ate lunch the again went outside with me and went potty; lots of praise, then back into the house for playtime. The puppy indulged in lots of activity, while the adult dog socialized with us and explored the house. I allowed this for a given amount of time, then back outside to potty, then back into the crate for naptime.

Evening: Puppy/dog woke up and straight away went outside. Verbally encouraged, then praised, they both quickly went potty and knowing that they had done what was required of them, straight away looked to go back into the house for dinner. Dinner was eaten – back outside. Family social hour – back outside.

This routine **WORKS**. I will tell you with absolute honesty that in both instances, I didn't have to clean up a single "accident" with either animal.



Please be patient.

At bed time, both animals had a last trip outside then were snuggled up for the night in their crate. When the puppy was very young, I set the alarm and took her outside once during the night. This nocturnal trip depends upon the age of the puppy and some babies may need to go out more than once during the night initially. This improves with age. Remember whenever he or she wakes you up in the middle of the night, that your dog is reacting to your training and is actually doing the right thing by asking.

If you work, don't expect the puppy to wait 10 to 12 hours while you are gone. Make arrangements to go home for lunch, or have a neighbor or friend come over and follow

the same routine of potty, praise, and play. As a puppy gets older and can hold it longer, the crate becomes less necessary. Just make sure that if you allow your dog freedom, he is still limited in a safe area. Check for electrical cords and unsafe "chewy" items. Better safe than sorry.

Remember, as your dog gets accustomed to his crate routine and enjoys the security of having his own space, never leave a puppy crated for longer than three or four hours at a time or an adult dog for longer than eight hours. If you crate your dog at night, you should make sure he has plenty of uncrated time during the day.

Even when the pup or dog is no longer confined to the crate, they continue see it as their "den", their refuge, and I keep it available to them with the entrance door propped open. Whenever they choose to go into the crate, make sure they are left alone; especially make children respect it as the pup or dog's private place. Dogs love their crates, when they remain available to them they prefer to use them, cuddled into their favorite blanket.

Crates are also a very useful tool to employ as a puppy becomes older and is going through the stage where it is losing its puppy teeth and chewing on everything. Then, it's a good idea to crate him whenever you are away from the house.



Proper crate training of a puppy shapes the puppy's behavior positively using his animal instincts to your advantage. Surely, this is much better than accidents on your floor. Remember above all else to be tolerant and consistent in your training. Love your puppy and give him lots of praise when he does it correctly. Dogs love praise; they thrive on it and positive reinforcement works every time.

Remember though, crate is NOT a magical solution. If not used correctly, a dog will feel trapped and frustrated. As an example, if your dog is crated all day while you're at work and then crated again all night, he's definitely spending far too much time in much too small a space. Also remember that puppies under six months of age should never stay in a crate for more than three or four hours at a stretch. They can't control their functions for longer periods.

If your dog whines or cries when crated 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 taken outside to eliminate.

Try to ignore the whining for a few minutes. If your dog is just testing you, he will probably stop whining soon. Yelling at him or pounding on the crate will only make things worse and will definitely destroy the dog's confidence in your training. If the whining continues after you've ignored him for several minutes, use the phrase he's learnt to associate 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 certain 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 will just teach your dog to whine loud and long to get what he wants. If you've progressed slowly but surely through the training steps and haven't done too much too fast, you will be less likely to encounter this problem. If the problem becomes unmanageable, you may need to start the crate training process over again.

You need to be certain the [crate](#) is the correct size for the pup/dog. If it is too big, the pup may try to use part of it as a bathroom and this is something you definitely need to avoid. The crate needs to be big enough to allow the dog to stand up and lie down comfortably. If you know your dog is going to grow into a big dog, then consider getting a divider so you will have the proper size crate in the beginning and it can grow along with the dog!

Location is also immensely important. You must be able to hear the pup. If the pup is whining, he probably needs to go potty and should be taken out. Remember the routine outlined above. The crate should be in a room where there is activity.

[Crates](#) may be plastic (often referred to as flight kennels) or collapsible, metal pens. They come in different sizes and can be purchased at most pet supply stores as well as online. All have pros and cons, including cost, ventilation, clean-up, etc. My personal recommendation is [Amazon](#). They always have excellent prices (usually well below pet store prices), and they have a huge selection to choose from. Many models also qualify for FREE Super Saver Shipping.

This is an article I first wrote back in October 2005. It has been published extensively throughout the Internet and used by numerous vets, breeders and animal rescue organizations as hand-out for new puppy / dog owners. I'm truly gratified that my words have served to help so many dogs settle happily into their new homes.

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