

Using a Crate and House-Breaking Your Puppy

A sturdy wire mesh or a hard plastic crate can be the best friend you and your dog will ever have. To you, a crate may seem to be a “cage” and you may object to the idea. A dog however, regards his cage as a handy indoor doghouse -- a “security blanket” to which he can retreat to rest, to escape confusion or to adjust to strange surroundings. If you should travel with him or leave him with someone else, the crate means “home” wherever it is set up. For the puppy, the crate is an invaluable training aid. Confined to the crate while the owner is out of the house, the puppy can not destroy or soil anything or hurt himself. He needs the security as well when left alone.

Use of the crate: Start your puppy in it at 7 weeks. Set it up in a corner, put in a blanket, old rug, or soft towel. Don't use the cushions made to fit crates until he is well over the chewing state. It might be necessary to put a sheet over the top and sides of the crate - making it a real “dog house”, especially at night. Put in toys and feed pup in the crate so it is a very pleasant association for him. Don't force him into it or use it for punishment. If he flops down to sleep elsewhere, just gently pick him up, place him inside and shut the door until he is awake again. He will be too sleepy to care and will be getting the proper association. Soon he will seek it automatically on his own when tired. Take advantage of these sleepy periods and don't hesitate to confine him to the crate several times a day for short periods of time, especially when you are too busy to watch him. This is important not only to facilitate housebreaking, but to provide safety for the pup as well. Always confine him in the crate when you are out of the house! He may howl at first, not because of the crate, but because you are leaving him behind and he knows it. Leave him fresh water, and a nyla bone. He will settle down as soon as your are gone. Learning this type of discipline is a vital part of his young life. The puppy's brain is fully developed by seven weeks of age so he might as well learn with your help. Show him what you would rather he learn and do instead of letting him do whatever he wants on his own, picking up bad habits.

To maximize the use of the crate as a housebreaking tool, confine your puppy to the crate all night. Limit liquids and food late in the evening. The puppy will hesitate to soil in the crate because it is his house. The dog crate can spell real happiness for both dog and owner. Buy one big enough for the adult dog to stand, turn around, and lie down in easily. Make sure it will fit into your car/truck. Many metal crates are collapsible and the plastic ones easily break down in half and fit in your trunk for travel. The plastic ones are waterproof when the dog is wet from swimming or hunting, and they are approved for airline travel.

Crate Training - I strongly advise crate training your pup. The crate is not to be used as a form of punishment, rather a safe haven that is your pups alone. If you are in the house, you should never be in the position to say ‘where is the puppy’--- he should be in his crate. This will keep him from going on search and destroy missions throughout your house. Remember, if he destroys anything and you are not right there, correction is useless. He does not remember what he did. You can confine the pup to one room, usually the kitchen until he is completely housebroken.

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