

## Crate Training

Crate training uses a dog's natural instincts as a den animal. A dog's den is his home, a place to sleep and a place to hide/decompress. This provides your dog with a safe place as well as an area that is their own.

The primary use for a crate is housetraining. Most dogs don't like to eliminate where they sleep. The crate can limit access to the rest of the house while he learns other rules and parameters of the home. Crates are also the safest way to transport your dog in the car.

**A crate isn't a magical solution.** If not used correctly, a dog can feel trapped and frustrated. Never use the crate as a punishment. Your dog will start to fear it and refuse to enter it. Do not leave your dog in the crate too long. A dog that's crated day and night doesn't get enough exercise or human interaction and can become depressed or anxious. 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 and need to be relieved in order to understand that the crate is not for elimination.

### Selecting A Crate

Your dog's crate should be just large enough for them to stand up and turn around in. If your dog is still growing, choose a crate size that will accommodate their adult size. Block off the excess crate space so your dog can't eliminate at one end and sleep on the other. Most wire crates come with a divider to make this easier to achieve.

### 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.
  - Training should take place in a series of small steps. Don't go too fast.
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- ❖ Introduce Your Dog To The Crate
    - Place 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. Keep the door open and let the dog explore the crate at their leisure. Some dogs will be naturally curious and start sleeping in the crate right away.
    - Bring him over to the crate, and talk to them in a happy tone of voice. Encourage your dog to enter the crate by dropping some small food treats nearby, then just inside the door, and finally, all the way inside the crate. If they refuse to go all the

- way in at first, that's okay. Don't force them to enter.
- Continue tossing treats into the crate until your dog will walk calmly all the way into the crate to get the food. This step may take a few minutes or as long as several days.
  - Treat Fairy: once the crate is set up, randomly toss a few treats in the crate when your dog isn't looking. Let them find them on their own. This will peak their curiosity and they will go back to the crate often to check for more!
- ❖ Lengthen Crate Training Period
- Start by feeding your dog in the crate with the door closed. Once your dog is eating his regular meals in the crate with no sign of fear or anxiety, you can keep him there for short time periods while you're home.
  - Call him over to the crate and give them a cue to enter, such as "kennel." Encourage them by pointing to the inside of the crate with a treat in your hand.
  - After your dog enters the crate, praise, treat and close the door.
  - Sit quietly near the crate for a few minutes, and then go into another room for a few minutes. Return, sit quietly again for a short time, and then let them out of the crate.
  - Repeat this process several times a day, gradually increasing the length of time you leave them in the crate and the length of time you're out of their sight. It may also help to use a Kong or other interactive toy when you first start doing this.
- ❖ Crate Your Dog When You Leave
- After your dog can spend about 30 minutes in the crate without becoming anxious or afraid, you can begin leaving them crated for short periods when you leave the house. Don't make your departures emotional and prolonged—they should be matter-of-fact.
  - Praise your dog briefly, give them 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 to avoid increasing their anxiety over when you will return.
  - Continue to crate your dog for short periods from time to time when you're home so they don't associate crating with being left alone. You should also ignore your dog when they whine in the crate. If you consistently let them out when they whine, they figure out that it works! If you are potty training your puppy and think they are whining to go out, you can wait for them to settle down some and then take them out.

Good luck and happy wags from the AAA team!