

Crate Training

Why is the Crate a Good Idea?

Using a crate as a tool to help train your dog is not only incredibly effective, but it also plays off your dog's natural instincts to want to have a den-like area of escape that is just for him. Everyone always thinks a crate is only used for potty training, but it should be used for so much more! You can use your dog's crate to teach him impulse control, control over-excitement, practice obedience cues, and reinforce you as your dog's leader!



There is a flip side to this wonderful tool! The improper use of the crate can lead to quite the opposite. You could create a dog that barks excessively in the crate, or even attempts to break out of it! The goal is not for your dog to hate the crate! Follow our advice for crate training and you will be better equipped to create a calm and pleasant environment for your dog.

Choosing the Proper Size:

The size crate you choose for your puppy should be able to accommodate him when he is full grown. Again, your crate should be used for so much more than potty training. Expect to use it for his whole life, or at the very least until he is a year old. When in doubt of your puppy's potential full grown size, always go a little bigger.

The crate should include a divider that you can set to make the inside of the crate smaller or larger. At first, when potty training, you only want your puppy to have enough room to turn around and lay down comfortably. If you give him any extra room, he will go potty in one corner and sleep in the other.

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Choosing Appropriate Crate Items:

You should include a few things in your puppy's crate. First, a very small water bowl that attaches to the side of the crate is ideal. These are available in many different styles, even stainless steel to prevent puppies from chewing it up. Next, appropriate crate toys are very important. This should be toys that are NON-edible and very durable. Nylabone brand chew items are available in a wide range of textures, sizes, and durability. Finally, once your dog is past the stage of having accidents in the crate, a comfortable and washable bed will help ensure your dog is happy.



The Do's of Crate Training

- DO move the crate to different areas of the house! It may be a little strange for your dog at first, but he will learn quickly that his crate is his consistent place of security.
- DO encourage him to go in the crate on his own by tossing treats and toys in it. Some dogs are naturally suspicious of new things, and may take longer than others to become comfortable with going in. Give plenty of calm praise when they are in the crate.
- DO exercise your dog well before leaving him in the crate for any extended period. Keep in mind that a walk around the block may wear one dog out, while another would need to run around the block three times before he is tired. Give your dog sufficient exercise for his breed and energy level.

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The Do's of Crate Training (con't)

- DO keep a small dish of water in the cage if he will be left alone for more than two hours. It's best to use one that attaches to the side of the crate to prevent tipping.
- DO give him a chew item or two before you leave. Make sure this chew item is NOT edible (no rawhide, hooves, soft toys, natural bones, etc.). Nylabone and Kong brand toys can be great options.
- Do vary the chew toys day to day, and don't allow him to play with the toys freely outside of his crate. This will help ensure that he feels he only gets his special toys' when he is in his crate.



The Dont's of Crate Training

- DO NOT ever force your puppy into the crate! This will make him very fearful of the crate when it should feel safe. A fearful or suspicious animal will always take time and patience, but these are the ones that benefit the most from the security of a crate. The Do Not's of Crate Training
- DO NOT make the crate a punishment for bad behavior! Ironically, overuse of the crate for punishment can actually lead to a dog that misbehaves more often out of sheer disrespect and a lack of proper education on acceptable alternative behaviors.
- DO NOT let your dog out of the crate blind to how he is behaving inside of the crate. If he is behaving wildly, don't open the door. Use the crate to your benefit. Ignore bad behavior in the crate, and open the door only when he offers you calm behavior.

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The Don't's of Crate Training (con't)

- DO NOT let your dog burst out of the crate. Again, use the crate to your benefit. Teach him that when you open the door, he must wait for you to give him the okay before he can leave the crate. If, when you open the door, he starts to come out, just shut the door and try again. You will have to close the door on him several times, but he will learn quickly!
- DO NOT be unfair with how long you keep your dog crated! A dog should never be crated for more than four continuous hours. If you work long hours, have someone stop by to allow your dog some freedom.

