

Crate Training

by Jeanneane Kutsukos

The Crate is a Puppy's Safe Haven

When you bring your puppy home for the first time, pick out a location for the puppy's bed that is safe and comfortable. One of the best house breaking and containment methods is to put your puppy in a crate. Some people think a crate is mean or cruel, it is the complete opposite, it is a "home" or a safe haven for your pet. Keep the crate door open when you are home and close the door when you are sleeping or out of the house or cannot watch it. If the puppy is not cooperating and does not want to enter the crate, put a few treats in it at first to entice the puppy to enter.

The Crate Minimizes Damage

The crate minimizes the potential damage that the puppy might do to your house and furniture. This also helps to minimize your anger at the puppy for doing "puppy things,"--chewing, pulling at things, etc. The crate protects the puppy from harming itself, for example, choking on small items, shock from chewing through wires, pulling items down on it and so many more!

The Crate is a Puppy's Den

When dogs were in the wild, they would often "burrow" into the ground to create a den for safety. A crate is your puppy's "den." You need a crate that is large enough for your puppy to turn around in comfortably. Block part of the crate off if you purchase a large crate for later use. Your puppy will try not to soil its "home." Do not expect your puppy to "hold" for long periods of time. Do not put your puppy in a crate and expect it to stay there all day without soiling it. It cannot! You must remember it is still a baby.

Where to Put the Crate?

Dogs like to be near their family and that means you. When the puppy first comes home, put the crate next to your bed so you will wake up during the night when the

puppy needs to go outside. You can also reach down and reassure the puppy if it cries during the night. Do not, under any circumstances, put the puppy in bed with you unless you intend for it to sleep there as an adult.

It is very difficult for the puppy to understand if you allow it there at the beginning and then do not want it in your bed later. Keep in mind if you are single and then marry, it could cause a real problem.

Keep a Clean Crate!

Do not force a puppy to remain in a soiled crate. You must arrange your schedule to avoid this from happening. Clean out the crate regularly! We recommend that you use a non-ammonia cleaner, because ammonia is similar to a puppy's urine, the smell will attract him and he will repeat the behavior. You may want to purchase commercial dog soiling cleaners at a local pet store. Do not punish the dog if it soils the crate. Remember, a new puppy needs to go out every 2 hours, for example, each time it eats, wakes up, after a play session, and any other time it starts "sniffing" around the area.

My Puppy is Now an Adult

You will not need to continue crating once your dog becomes an adult (and is trustworthy), but your dog will probably enjoy the continued use of the crate as it's own special place. If you decide not to keep the crate, slowly wean it off once the dog is older and you are able to trust it in your home.

NEVER Use the Crate as a Punishment!

Pro Dog Training, Inc., Springfield, VA,