

Crate Training

The theory: Dog's are, in essence, domesticated wolves. They view their crate as their cave. Since caves are hard to come by in the wild, dogs know instinctively to keep them clean and to hold urine and stool for other locations. Because of this, crates can be extremely useful in house training a puppy and are one of the few ways a puppy will learn to hold their urine for longer periods.



Buying a crate:

Pick a crate that will accommodate your puppy when he achieves adult size. A representative from the pet store should be able to help you pick the right size, and many crates will list appropriate breeds for each size cage.

Setting it up:

At first, you will probably need to block off part of the crate to limit the size available for puppies. If a puppy can pick one end as the bathroom and one end as the bedroom then he will do that. Once he is trained then you can allow him access to the whole cage.

You can put some padding but don't use too much. If a puppy urinates accidentally in the cage, he must be aware of it. Too much padding can block his natural instinct to not urinate.

The first night:

It is not uncommon for puppies to cry a little their first few nights in the crate. Just like children, a puppy cries for attention. If you rush in to the puppy when he cries, you are inadvertently training him to cry to summon you for attention. The best method is to tough out the crying and it should stop within 2-3 days.

Occasionally a puppy will panic in the crate and become very destructive. This is very rare. If this happens you may try putting the crate in the bedroom with you to reduce separation anxiety. If he cries, still try to ignore him. Just don't let him hurt himself.

Beginning training:

Until a puppy is about 4 months old, it is very hard for him to make it 8 hours without urinating. So you will have to schedule a middle-of-the-night walk. Likewise it is not a good idea to leave him in his crate all day, unless you can schedule a mid-day walk.

Whenever you leave the house, whether it be for a 20 minute errand or dinner and a movie, it is best to crate your puppy. When you come home, walk him immediately. This way you are most likely to train him quickly to hold his urine and to go outside.

Pick a command, or phrase to use to indicate to your dog he is to get into his crate. Many trainers use "kennel up" but you can use "bedtime" or "crate". After a few days of use your puppy will get the idea.

House Breaking:

The best way to train your puppy to go to the bathroom outside is to walk him every ½ hour. However, almost no one has that kind of time available. So, barring that, if you use the below 3 times as cues as to when to walk him, you will catch him 95% of the time.

Walk your puppy-

- 1) 10 minutes after he eats.
- 2) Right after he leaves his crate.
- 3) Right after he wakes up.

When he urinates or defecates outside praise him, pat him, and sometimes give him a treat. When you are training him, you must go outside with him for his entire walk so that you are there to praise him immediately after he goes to the bathroom.

If he has an accident, either in the house or in his crate, ignore it completely. Scolding him only confuses him and almost always backfires on you. If you catch him in the act, say “no”, pick him up and take him outside.

Usually papers confuse the issue. If you cannot come home from work during the day, it is probably going to be necessary to close him in an appropriate room and give him papers. Understand that doing this will make the process longer.

Papers in the crate are going to confuse your puppy too. Remember, the crate is his bedroom.

These are what usually cause the most troubles with crate training:

- 1) Too large a crate.
Solution: Temporarily block off enough crate so that your sleeping puppy covers 2/3 of the floor space.
- 2) Too much padding at first.
Solution: Remove all padding for a few nights. Remember, if a puppy urinates in the crate, he must know the consequences. You can replace the padding once he gets the hang of it.
- 3) Thinking the crate is cruel, and removing the puppy once he whimpers.
(After all this is proof of the cruelty!)
Solution: Almost every dog loves their crate, most will chose to sleep in it even if the door is wide open. Covering the crate increases their sense of security. You can put toys in the crate too. Many dogs will hide their toys in their crate.
- 4) Putting papers in the crate.
Solution: Don't confuse the issue. Likewise, don't put food in the crate. Water is okay at first but later it is not important.
- 5) Using the crate as punishment.
Solution: Don't confuse the issue. While it is true that ignoring your puppy is the best way to get him to think about acting badly, use an isolated room or just ignore him while he's in the room with you.