

CRATE TRAINING

There are many advantages to crate training your dog. It is an invaluable aid in house-training and in solving behavior problems such as chewing. Traveling in a car with your dog is safer for both you and him if he is crated. It is less risky to leave him in a crate in a hotel room when you go to dinner without having to worry about your dog destroying the room or furniture in his apprehension that you have left him (separation anxiety).

There may come a time in your dog's life when he will have to stay confined at a boarding facility or the veterinarian's office. Crate training will reduce the trauma for him while caged.

The crate does not represent a prison for your dog. On the contrary, your dog will come to look upon the crate as a refuge, a den, and a place to relax and get away from it all. This is especially important if you have children who like to play with your dog – when he has had enough he will have a private place to rest.

Select a crate suitable to the size of your dog or puppy. The best size is large enough for your dog to stand up, turn around, and lie down in comfort, but no so large that your puppy can go to the bathroom at one end and sleep the other. For example, a crate that would suit a full-grown Mastiff would be an exercise pen for a Mastiff puppy.

Before beginning the training, set the crate up. Take your dog to the crate and let him investigate. Show it to him while talking in a happy voice. Rattle it a little to show him that it may make noise. You don't want him to first hear the rattle when he is already in the crate and be frightened because he didn't expect noise.

Armed with a bowl of low-fat treats, begin the crate training as follows:

1. Place your dog in the crate with a command such as: "get in the crate" or "go to bed" or simply "kennel" spoken in a happy voice. Once in, praise excitedly and give him a treat. Immediately let him out. Repeat three to five times or until your dog gets into the crate with little or no physical guidance.
2. Command your dog to enter the crate, praise him, give him the treat and close the door with him inside. Scratch him through the side of the crate and tell him how wonderful he is, and let him out. Repeat this step five times.
3. Command your dog into the crate, praise, give him a treat, shut the door, and leave the room for 5 seconds. Return, tell him how wonderful he is, and let him out. Repeat five times.
4. Command your dog into the crate, praise, give him treat, shut the door, and leave the room for 10 seconds, then 20, then 1 minute.
5. The final step is to put your dog in the crate, praise, give him the treat and leave the house.

The quickest way to accustom a dog to a crate is to keep it in the bedroom and crate him at night. This also facilitates house-training.

REMEMBER THESE IMPORTANT RULES

FOR CRATING A DOG:

1. During the crating process, always give the dog a treat for getting in the crate.
2. Do not be apprehensive or apologetic to your dog for putting him in the crate. Be very matter-of-fact or happy about it. He won't view it as punishment unless he senses that you do.
3. Never let your dog out of the crate when he is barking. This will be rewarding him for barking, and in a very few repetitions, he will learn that barking means he can get out of the crate. That is exactly how you teach your dog to bark in the crate. If he is barking, make him be quiet before you let him out of the crate.
4. If you are using the crate for house-training and your dog has an accident in the crate, do not scold him. He has been punished enough by having to stay in the close quarters with his accident. Simply let him out, take him outside, and then clean up the crate.
5. Do not use the crate as a form of punishment.
6. When your dog is not confined to the crate, leave the door open, so he can have access to it at will.

Even an older dog can be successfully introduced to a crate. Here are a couple real stories from WPVH's past. Gail had an untrained 1½ year-old mastiff returned to her because he was a destructive chewer when left alone. When a Mastiff is a destructive chewer, that's an expensive proposition. One of the first things Gail did was invest in a very large crate, and proceeded to crate train Argus. Although not yet grown, Argus weighed about 175 pounds. When he decided he would just as soon not get into the crate there was very little that Gail could do to physically force him. What she did was get in the crate herself, show Argus the treat, and entices him to join her – which he did. After several repetitions, Argus willingly went in by himself.

Jack had a similar experience with a full-grown Newfoundland, Arin, whom he wanted to crate train. No matter what he did, Arin refused to get in the crate. So Jack took the top off the crate, lifted Arin into it, gave her a treat, opened the door and let her out. As in the previous case, after several successful repetitions, Arin overcame her aversion and was willing to get into the crate through the door.

BE PATIENT – MAKE IT FUN – GIVE PRAISE FOR SUCCESS!