



CRATE TRAINING

Introduction

Before I had dogs of my own, I thought crates were cruel for dogs. Now that I have a number of them, I have come to change my feelings towards the crates. I realize now that the crate can be the dogs "safe place" or "home within the home". It can help reduce separation anxiety when you are away, prevent destructive behavior, keep the dog away from potential household dangers, and serve as a mobile indoor dog house. The crate can also serve as a travel cabin when you have to transport your dog in the car or have to take him places where he may not be welcomed to run freely.

If properly trained, your dog will think of the crate as his safe place and will happily spend time there when needed or just "hang-out" in it.

I now truly recommend a crate throughout your dog's life if used properly.

Buying and Furnishing Your Crate

Buying a Crate:

Crates may be plastic, collapsible or metal pens and range in cost from \$35 to \$150. They can be purchased through most pet supply outlets or online and vary in size. When selecting a crate of appropriate size for your breed, the overall height/length of your pet is more important than the weight. It is generally recommended that your pet have a crate 6" longer than body length and 6" higher than shoulder height. Your dog's crate should be just large enough for him to stand up and turn around in. If your dog is still growing, choose a crate size that will accommodate his adult size. Block off the excess crate space. For most miniature dachshunds a medium small crate will do (22 L x 13 W x 16 H).

Furnishing Your Crate:

Toys and Treats: Place your dog's favorite toy or ball and dog treats at the far end opposite the door opening. Toys should always be inedible and large enough to prevent their being swallowed.

Water: A water dispenser with water should be attached to the crate if your dog is to be confined for more than two hours in the crate.

Bedding: Place a towel or blanket inside the crate to create a soft, comfortable bed for the dog. Although most dogs prefer lying on soft bedding, some may prefer to rest on a hard, flat surface, and may push the towel to one end of the crate to avoid it.

Location of Crate: Whenever possible, place the crate near or next to you when you are home. This will encourage the dog to go inside it without his feeling lonely or isolated when you go out.



Introducing the Crate to Your Dog

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, and training should take place in a series of small steps. Don't go too fast.

In order that your dog associates his/her crate with comfort, security and enjoyment, please follow these few guidelines:

- ◆ Occasionally throughout the day, drop small pieces of treats in the crate. While investigating his new crate, the dog will discover edible treasures, thereby reinforcing his positive associations with the crate.
- ◆ In the beginning, praise and pet your dog when he enters. Do not try to push, pull or force the dog into the crate. At this early stage of introduction only inductive methods are suggested. Overnight exception: You may need to place your dog in his crate and shut the door upon retiring. (In most cases, the crate should be placed next to your bed overnight. If this is not possible, the crate can be placed in a nearby room).
- ◆ You may also play this enjoyable and educational game with your dog: without alerting your dog, drop a small dog biscuit into the crate. Then call your dog and say to him, "Where's the biscuit? It's in your room." Using only a friendly, encouraging voice, direct your dog toward his crate. When the dog discovers the treat, give enthusiastic praise. The biscuit will automatically serve as a primary reward. Your dog should be free to leave its crate at all times during this game. Later on, your dog's toy or ball can be substituted for the treat.
- ◆ It is advisable first to crate your dog for short periods of time while you are home with him. In fact, crate training is best accomplished while you are in the room with your dog. Getting him used to your absence from the room in which he is crated is a good first step. This prevents an association being made with the crate and you're leaving him/her alone.
- ◆ Don't make your departures emotional and prolonged—they should be matter-of-fact. Praise your dog briefly, give him 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 his anxiety over when you will return.

A Note About Crating Puppies

Puppies under 4 months of age have little bladder or sphincter control. Puppies under 3 months have even less. Very young puppies under 9 weeks should not be crated, as they need to eliminate very frequently (usually 8-12 times or more daily).



Important Reminders

Collars: Always remove your dog's collar before confining in the crate. Even flat buckle collars can occasionally get struck on the bars or wire mesh of a crate. If you must leave a collar on when you crate him (e.g.: for his identification tag), use a safety "break away" collar.

Warm Weather: Do not crate a dog when temperatures reach an uncomfortable level. Cold water should always be available to your dog, especially during warm weather. **Never leave an unsupervised dog on a terrace, roof or inside a car during warm weather. Also, keep outdoor exercise periods brief until the hot weather subsides.**

Be certain that your dog has fully eliminated shortly before being crated. Be sure that the crate you are using is not too large to discourage your dog from eliminating in it. Rarely does a dog eliminate in the crate if it is properly sized and the dog is an appropriate age to be crated a given amount of time. If your dog continues to eliminate in the crate, the following may be the causes:

1. The dog is too young to have much control.
2. The dog has a poor or rich diet, or very large meals.
3. The dog did not eliminate prior to being confined.
4. The dog has worms.
5. The dog has gaseous or loose stools.
6. The dog drank large amounts of water prior to being crated.
7. The dog has been forced to eliminate in small confined areas prior to crate training.
8. The dog is suffering from a health condition or illness (i.e., bladder infection, prostate problem, etc.)
9. The dog is experiencing severe separation anxiety when left alone.

Note: Puppies purchased in pet stores, or puppies which were kept solely in small cages or other similar enclosures at a young age (between approximately 7 and 16 weeks of age), may be considerably harder to housebreak using the crate training method due to their having been forced to eliminate in their sleeping area during this formative stage of development. This is the time when most puppies are learning to eliminate outside their sleeping area. Confining them with their waste products retards the housebreaking process, and this problem can continue throughout a dog's adult life.

Accidents In The Crate

If your dog messes in his crate while you are out, do not punish him upon your return. Simply wash out the crate using a pet odor neutralizer. **Do not use ammonia-based products**, as their odor resembles urine and may draw your dog back to urinate in the same spot again.



Crating Duration Guidelines

9-10 Weeks	Approx. 30-60 minutes
11-14 Weeks	Approx. 1-3 hours
15-16 Weeks	Approx. 3-4 hours
17 + Weeks	Approx. 4+ (6 hours maximum)

A crate isn't a magical solution. If not used correctly, a dog can feel trapped and frustrated. For example, if your dog is crated all day while you're at work and then crated again all night, he's spending too much time in too small a space. Other arrangements should be made to meet his physical and emotional needs. Except for overnight, neither puppies nor dogs should be crated for more than 5 hours at a time. (6 hours maximum!)

The Crate As Punishment

NEVER use the crate as a form of punishment or reprimand for your puppy or dog. Sufficient daily exercise is important for healthy puppies and dogs. Regular daily walks should be offered as soon as a puppy is fully immunized. Backyard exercise is not enough!

Children And The Crate

Do not allow children to play in your dog's crate or to handle your dog while he/she is in the crate. The crate is your dog's private sanctuary. His/her rights to privacy should always be respected.

Barking In The Crate

In most cases a pup who cries incessantly in his crate has either been crated too soon (without taking the proper steps as outlined above) or is suffering from separation anxiety and is anxious about being left alone. Some pups may simply be under exercised. Others may not have enough attention paid them. These dogs may need the "Alternate Method of Confining Your Dog", along with increasing the amount of exercise and play your dog receives daily.

When Not To Use A Crate

Do not crate your puppy or dog if:

- ◆ S/he is too young to have sufficient bladder or sphincter control.
- ◆ S/he has diarrhea. Diarrhea can be caused by: worms, illness, intestinal upset such as colitis, too much and/or the wrong kinds of food, quick changes in the dog's diet, or stress, fear or anxiety.
- ◆ S/he is vomiting.
- ◆ You must leave him/her crated for more than the Crating Duration Guidelines suggest.



- ◆ S/he has not eliminated shortly before being placed inside the crate.
- ◆ The temperature is excessively high.
- ◆ S/he has not had sufficient exercise, companionship and socialization.

Alternative Method Of Confining Your Puppy

There are alternative methods to crating very young puppies and puppies that must be left alone in the house for lengths of time exceeding the recommended maximum duration of confinement. We suggest the following:

- ◆ Use a small to medium-sized room space such as a kitchen, large bathroom or hallway with non-porous floor.
- ◆ Set up the crate on one end, the food and water a few feet away, and some newspaper or puppy pads several feet away.
- ◆ Confine your puppy to this room or area using a 3 ft. high, safety-approved child's gate rather than shutting off the opening by a solid door. Your pup will feel less isolated if it can see out beyond its immediate place of confinement.