



## **Crate Training Your Dog**

Why should I crate train my dog? Crate training your dog has many benefits to you and your dog. Crate training can help with house-training as well as dealing with issues such as separation anxiety and chewing. Crates also provide a safe environment for your puppy or dog. We put babies in playpens to keep them out of harm's way, why not do the same for our "fur babies"? Crates also help provide safe transport in a car. A dog in a crate is less likely to be harmed in an accident and less likely to be the cause of an accident (while you're driving).

### **Isn't crating a dog mean?**

On the contrary, crating your dog gives your dog a place of his own – his own room, if you will. First of all, remember that dogs are den animals. In the wild, dogs live in dens. A crate provides that den-like environment. You may have even noticed your dog making a den for himself in a corner, under a bed, or under the kitchen table. This gives your dog a sense of security. Another thing to keep in mind while deciding whether or not to crate is that crating your dog when you can't keep an eye on him (while you're out, or busy with housework...) will help to keep him out of trouble. What is "meaner" – to let your dog get into trouble and suffer the consequences, or spend some quiet time in the crate? Of course, we're not telling you to crate your dog for ten hours at a time, or to spend all of its time in a crate. Use your common sense and best judgment when it comes to crating.

### **How do I know what size crate I need?**

The size of the crate will be determined by the size of the dog going into it. A dog should have enough room to stand up, turn around and lie down comfortably in the crate. An appropriate toy or two can be placed inside the crate, but this is not an exercise pen for Fido. If your dog is a puppy and you don't want to change kennel sizes as your dog grows, then you can try to best determine what your dog's size will be when full-grown and buy that size crate.

### **How long can my dog stay in the crate?**

The rule of thumb is: for every month of age a dog can be crated for one hour. Preceding and following being crated, a dog should have ample opportunity for aerobic activity. You should also be careful to try not to keep your dog crated for longer than 8 hours a day. Dogs crave your company, and need the socialization that being with you can provide.

### **How can the crate help me with house training my dog?**

Many experts believe that house training is easier when using a crate. The main theory behind house training and crating is this: A dog does not usually like to "mess" where he lives (i.e. his den/crate). By using a crate, a dog is more motivated to keep from eliminating until taken to an appropriate spot.

### **Puppies**

Remember that puppies need to go often. You will likely have success with "potty time" if you take your puppy out when he: Wakes up, after he eats, and after he finishes playing. If, after

your trip outside, puppy hasn't produced, and you can't keep both eyes on him – put him in the crate. Give him about 15-20 minutes and try going outside again. Continue this, eventually he'll do something. Be sure to praise his success. \*One thing to keep in mind if you purchased a crate that will accommodate your puppy's size when he is full grown is this: You will need to section off part of the crate to make it smaller. You want to avoid giving your pup extra room to do his business and allowing him to remain free and clear of it. A piece of cardboard or a thin board slid through the grating will easily remedy this situation.\*

## **Dogs**

Crate training can be invaluable in helping a new dog adjust to your house. Even if you have adopted an older, previously house broken dog, a period of adjustment is not uncommon. A crate is a great tool to getting over that little bump in the road. As with a young pup, if you can't keep both eyes on your dog at all times, then crate him until you are free to do so. You'll probably find that he will adjust quickly to his new surroundings, and he won't have to be quite so closely supervised.

## **How else can crate training help me?**

Crates are helpful with “adolescent” dogs whose owners are at work all day. If your dog is in the crate, he's not getting into anything he shouldn't be. For dogs with separation anxiety, crating can curb a host of destructive behaviors that can accompany a dog who panics at being alone. I haven't been using a crate, but would like to start. I'm afraid my dog won't like it, what can I do? Make your dog's crate his special place. You can make it more comfortable by lining it with a blanket. Have some special “crate only” toys that your dog can only play with in his crate. You might try feeding your dog in the crate – he'll associate something pleasurable (eating) with the crate. Don't place the crate in an out of the way spot. Dogs are very social beings and love to be with you. Place the crate in a bedroom (especially if you want your dog to sleep in the crate overnight) or in the family room. Make sure that you don't use the crate as punishment – you want your dog to like spending time in there. Also, make sure that everyone who comes to your house understands that the crate is your dog's private space. He should not be bothered while he is in there. Often a dog will retreat to its crate to get away from the noise and confusion of a busy household. This means that children should not use the crate as a fort, or climb in the crate with the dog to sleep with it. The crate is the dog's personal space, and that needs to be respected. Crate training can be useful in dealing with an array of behavioral issues with your dog or puppy.

At the Humane Society, many of our dogs might not have ended up here if their owners had viewed using a crate as a viable solution to surrendering their dog to the shelter. With a little bit of common sense, using a crate can help many a dog and their families live together happily.

*This document is being provided for informational purposes only and is not intended as behavioral counsel.*