



Crate Training



Jen Ticsay, *Dances with Woofs Dog Training*

Crate training is an excellent way to keep your dog safe and your house in tact. Whether you have a puppy or an adult dog, crate training has many useful applications. Crate training can keep your dog safe from the dangers in your house, the trash, the electric cords, unobserved play between two dogs, etc. Crate training gives you the opportunity to teach your puppy proper chewing and elimination habits while you are home and prevent inappropriate behavior when you cannot be with your puppy. Dogs that are destructive or urine mark can also be prevented from their bad habits with the proper use of a crate.

When choosing a crate, pick a crate that is big enough for your dog to turn around in a circle and stand when it is full grown. Some dogs do not like the wire crates with plastic trays on the bottom, while other dogs prefer the openness of those crates. I personally use the plastic crates with the wire front opening.

Until your dog is ready for the crate you can use a puppy pen. A small confined area that has a side to sleep and a side to potty. You can put the puppy in the pen when you are home and cannot watch the puppy and when you are going to be gone. Give the puppy fun things to chew on, toys, bedding. On the other side you can use a puppy pad or some sod. Use this to prevent accidents in your home and to keep the puppy safe. You should be practicing the crate while using the puppy pen.



Start with the crate in an area of the house where you spend a lot of time. This will allow you to practice while you are watching television or cooking dinner. It will also ensure the puppy that the crate does not mean isolation. Make sure the door to the crate is secure so that it does not startle the dog. Begin crate training by going to the

Keep Your Home and Puppy Safe. Put Your Puppy in a Puppy Pen When You Have to Be Gone.

crate with your dog and tossing a treat or a toy into the crate. If the dog follows the treat do many repetitions of tossing the treat or toy into the kennel. You can also keep favored toys into the kennel so that when the puppy goes in on his own he will find the toy. If your dog does not go into the kennel, put treats around the crate and just inside the door and slowly shape the distance the dog will go into the crate. You can also feed your puppy close to the crate and slowly move to food into the kennel. When your dog or puppy will readily walk into the crate add a cue to the tossing of the treat such as "kennel" or "go to your bed".

Once your dog is fully comfortable with walking in the crate, Start by shutting the door for a second, reward the dog thru the door and then let the pup out. Continue this increasing by a couple of seconds on each repetition. When you have achieved a minute or two, while being next to the kennel, you can then increase the difficulty. Get a toy that you can stuff a treat into. There are many choices on the market. They can be stuffed with treats, peanut butter, or canned dog food. Stuff the toy and show it to your pup, toss it into the crate while cueing the dog to go in the crate. Shut the door and take a few steps away from the crate. Go back to the crate open the door and take the tasty treat away from the dog. The dog should only get the treat filled toy while he is in the kennel. Gradually increase the time and distance away from the kennel. Eventually you will want to go out of site and come back and reward your dog.

Practice crate training while you are home with the dog. And use the crate while you are home and the dog is tired. Your goal is to have the dog believe that you don't leave every time that you put the dog in the crate.



Crates Come in a Wide Variety of Shapes and Styles. Find One that Fits Your Dog and Lifestyle.

Putting a puppy in the crate when it is tired and wanting to sleep will let the puppy know that the crate is a good place to sleep.

You can take advantage of meal time by feeding your dog in the crate. If your dog is comfortable shut the door while the dog is eating. Try feeding your dog out of a Kong to teach your dog to be calm inside the crate and self sooth.

Eventually when your dog goes into the crate readily you want to reverse the order in which you give the treat and the cue. Cue your dog "kennel" and then shut the door and give the treat. This will eventually lead to the weaning down or eventual elimination of the use of treats.

When your dog can be in the crate for around 30 min you can start leaving the dog alone in the kennel. You can



put the dog in the crate a 10-20 minutes prior to leaving to prevent your dog from assuming you leave right after he goes into the crate.

If you are using the crate to house train a young puppy, put some bedding in the crate and news paper or a puppy pad on the other half of the crate. This will help your puppy keep the bedding clean even if he has to go. Water can be left in the kennel for your dog. There are bowls that can be purchased that attach to the door of the kennel.

If your dog cries in the process, either wait until the dog has stopped crying or whining before you let him out of the crate. You can make a gentle tapping on the kennel so that the dog stops to listen. Only let your dog out of the crate when it is quiet. If you let your puppy out when it cries or scratches it will cry louder or longer next time it wants out. The same goes for scratching the door of the kennel. If your dog is gets anxious while in the crate you need to take a step back in the training process by rewarding a shorter amount of time or distance.

Remember that a crate should never be used as a punishment and does not replace the dogs need for exercise and attention. The crate should always be associated with something pleasant and crate training should be done slowly. If your dog has separation anxiety the crate can be a useful tool but does not solve the problem. Make sure to address separation anxiety separately then crate training.

Crate training can your dog build the habits you want while also keeping your dog safe. Dogs that are crate trained can also have a less stressful stay at the veterinary clinic. When hospitalize the dogs need to be in a cage. Proper crate training will make this hospitalization less stressful for your pet.



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