

Crate Training

A crate can be an extremely useful training tool for housetraining puppies, retraining adult dogs, and preventing destructive behavior from young dogs. If you want to use a crate for training purposes, you must first help your dog learn to be relaxed and calm when in a crate and when left alone in one. When dogs are introduced to crates gradually, many enjoy resting there if they can come and go at will.

Your dog must be able to stand up, lie down, stretch out and turn around comfortably, but not do much else in the crate you choose. Water should always be available. A special treat or toy such as a toy stuffed with food or a chewie bone should be provided for entertainment and to make the crate special and relaxing.

Place the crate in a room where you spend considerable time. Initially, leave the door to the crate open and let your dog freely go in and out. Entice your dog to enter the crate by tossing toys and treats inside. Praise your dog for going into the crate. You can also place your dog's food in the crate and allow him to eat several meals there, with the door open, to convince him it is nothing to be afraid of.

When your dog is comfortable going in and out of the crate freely, remain by the crate and shut the door briefly. After a few seconds, open the door and release your dog. Place a favorite chew toy in the crate before shutting the door. Repeat these brief periods of confinement a number of times, gradually increasing their duration.

Next, place your dog in the crate, leave the room for a few seconds, return, leave again, return and release your dog from the crate. Gradually increase the time you are out of sight. If at any time during this training your dog shows any signs of distress such as barking, whining, drooling, relieving herself in or trying to escape the crate, stop immediately and go back to an earlier stage in your training.

Once your dog is crate trained, continue to crate your dog from time to time when you are home, to compensate for the inevitable association between being crated and being left alone.

Your dog should never be crated longer than he can hold his bladder and bowels. For young puppies this maybe no more than an hour or two.