



CRATE TRAINING FOR PUPPY

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Canis familiaris long ago was a wild dog, in nature they always had a nice little den to sleep and live in. The puppies would be carefully hidden here to keep them safe and warm, and so dogs by nature like to have a cubby they can call their own.

Modern crate training provides a warm, soft and secure spot for the puppy to go and rest in, away from our sometimes hectic households!

If crating is done correctly and is not ever used as punishment, or used for long periods to induce isolation stress, the puppy will learn to love his or her little private room. Think of the crate as an indoor dog house.

Introducing your puppy to the crate

After weaning, the pup is entering a strange setting so starting from day one with a nice crate to offer as safe haven will help to keep moving in stress levels low. The crate will help keep puppy in a safe environment too. When first introducing the puppy to the crate, allow the puppy to explore it, and if he cannot figure out how to get in, placing some food just inside the door will get him curious.

Start by just doing feeding time in the crate. After he has settled into this, try short sessions alone in the crate. Use the doggie **rule of thumb that the pup should stay in the crate for one hour per month of age, plus one**. For example, a four month-old pup can be expected to stay up to five hours in the crate without messing. Use plenty of praise when you find him resting quietly in the kennel.

A wire crate with an impervious metal base provides an easily cleaned structure. Make sure the wire is not so widely spaced that the pup could become stuck in the mesh.

A thick soft bed can be placed over the metal—many people prefer sheep's wool pillows. Some prefer the plastic crates and these are just fine as well. Watch that puppy does not chew and swallow any bedding within reach because pieces of cloth and pillow can cause stomach or gut blockage.

Regularly clean and scrub the crate

Regular cleaning and scrubbing of the crate with dilute bleach (1:20 dilution) while wearing gloves will keep the germ load under control, since until potty training is complete, a few accidents are bound to occur. Note that dogs do not like to mess their private den area so

using a crate can help to accelerate their training. As long as frequent trips outside are available, pup will choose outside rather than inside the crate.

The wire allows for good air circulation but if the puppy needs a bit of extra warmth or privacy, placing a towel over the top and part way down the sides provides a bit more warmth and reduced light. Avoid placing an open-mesh crate in a draft. Make sure there is plenty of room for him to get up and turn around in, leaving some extra space for dishes.

Some people place the crate in their bedroom at night, but this is not necessary, and may prevent a good night's sleep as puppy may call out for attention. To help reassure the puppy at the start, some people provide a ticking clock or a low volume radio in the room with the crate. Leaving the room door ajar with a baby light on allows you to check in on puppy without waking him up. Avoid opening the kennel and fussing with him if he barks whines or digs, or you will positively reinforce the undesirable behaviour —and then he might not want to settle in. Offering some treats to him while quietly crated helps to reinforce the pleasant crate environment and his desirable behaviour.

If you work out of the home, make sure you have a pet sitter or friend let the dog out at lunch (or more frequently for the younger puppy). They can provide him some valuable "TLC" and a much needed potty break.

Avoid any punishment in or around the crate at all—if the puppy soils inside, ignore it and offer a chance to go outside and then praise him for the desired behaviour. Make sure you offer him frequent trips outside. Remember to take him out when he wakes, and 5 to 20 minutes after eating as these are very common times for puppy to need to go. Provide a regular and frequent schedule of meals and walks.

Don't forget to leave some fun toys in the crate with him! He can then get some good chewing time there instead of on your valuable furniture, and he can have some enrichment playtime too.

Properly introduced and properly used, a crate can be a cozy, safe place for your new puppy to snuggle up in!