



Canine Intelligence Academy.Com

Canine Consultants

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Crate Training

As dog training consultants for many years we have gotten the frantic call from many a new dog or puppy owner – “Help! My rescue doggie is destroying the house!” or “Help! My puppy is relieving everywhere and destroying the house!” So, our first question is “are you crate training?” Contrary to some people’s opinion, a crate or kennel is not “doggie jail”. Think of it this way, dogs are natural den creatures and will seek out a location in a corner, under a table, or any protected area to be a den. A crate should be considered like a den, a lair, a safe-haven, a place for your dog to rest in relative comfort away from noise & activity.

A crate is one of the most useful devices for raising a puppy. Many problems simply vanish when a crate is properly used.

The crate can aid in the following:

- House training puppies.
- Keeps your puppy out of trouble when you can not supervise him or you are away (not to exceed 3 or 4 hours at a time during the awake hours during the day).
- Can save hundreds of dollars in damages to household items during the teething stages.
- It can be easily used in the car.
- Taken along on trips to make traveling with the puppy more enjoyable.

People who raise, train, and show dogs have been aware of the above benefits of using a crate for many years. The puppies we have raised, slept in a crate during the night, and are crated for a time during the day when we can’t keep an eye on them. When our adult dogs want to rest in relative comfort away from noise & activity, they will nudge the door of their crate open and lay down to have a nap during the day.

As the guardian of your dog, it is your responsibility to provide for the needs of your dog, and crate training can be a vital tool in making his life and yours more safe and enjoyable. The crate needs to be large enough for the animal to stand up, turn around, and lay down. Select a size that can accommodate a full grown dog and use a partition to limit the space with your puppy. Give the puppy too much room and you may end up with the puppy sleeping at one end and relieving in the other.

A crate is the safest place to transport your puppy or dog in the car. Leaving him loose, or on your lap, or (horrors!) hanging his head out the window, is just plain dangerous. Consider the repercussions of having your car’s airbag deploy (actually explode), even if



you are involved in a minor fender-bender. Placing your dog in the back seat area of your car and using the seat belt restraint for the back seat for your dog is an alternative to using a crate in your car.

Crate Training your Puppy:

1. Crate should never be used as a punishment.
2. The bedroom is recommended location for the crate because the puppy wants to associate with you and be part of the pack.
3. Do not force your puppy into the crate.
4. Several times during the awake hours of the day train your puppy to use the crate by tossing a treat or toy inside, and encourage your puppy to go inside the crate to get the treat or toy. In addition to help your puppy feel that this is his place you could even feed him a few times in the crate to help relax the puppy.
5. When your puppy takes the treat just inside the crate praise him with a happy voice.
6. When your puppy is comfortable with taking the treat just inside the crate, gradually toss the treat further back inside the crate so he has to enter the crate to get the treat. Praise your puppy with a happy voice for going into the crate to get the treat.
7. Continue to give treats and praise as long as your puppy stays inside the crate.
8. When your puppy is comfortable being inside the crate for a few moments, gently close the door of the crate, then open it again. Give your puppy a treat and praise. Do not open the door if your puppy is barking or whining. Only open the door when he is quiet.
9. When opening the crate and letting the puppy out, do not make a big fuss.
10. Gradually increase the time that the crate door is closed. Start with 2 second and increase with 2 seconds interval. Your goal is to open the door before your puppy barks or whines.
11. When your puppy is comfortable with the crate door closed for several minutes, begin moving out of sight for short period (2 seconds) and the return to him and give a treat and praise and then open the door. Keep your attitude low key when you open the door so you do not get your puppy excited.
12. Gradually increase the time you are out of sight by 2 second interval. Your goal as above is to open the door before your puppy barks or whines.
13. At night close the crate door, say good night. Your puppy might fuss at first, but if you don't react and just remain silent, he will finally relax and go to sleep.
14. Interestingly, a puppy makes a different noise when he needs to relieve while confined since animals prefer not to soil their beds. So be ready to open the crate and scoop him up (otherwise he might relieve along the way), to take him to his



potty area, then it is back to the crate without much “fanfare.” If you do play with the puppy he will learn to awaken you often at night when he wants to play.

15. Limiting evening water and one last relieving opportunity before lights out, will help your puppy from having an accident during the evening. It may take several weeks of interrupted sleep before the puppy can be expected to control his bladder and bowels for more than a few hours at a time. Around five to six months seems to be the age when most puppies are better able to restrain themselves and be more reliable in their housebreaking.
16. Your puppy barking in the crate could mean:
 - He is trying to get your attention
 - Needs to go to the bathroom or
 - He is stressed about being in the crate.

The most common reason is he wants your attention. To address this barking you simply need to ignore your puppy. Do not look at him or say anything to him. Once he has stopped barking wait a few seconds then give him positive attention and a treat to reward him for not barking. By doing this he will learn that not barking is the way to get your attention. If you think your dog has to go to the bathroom, then take him to his potty area and then return him to the crate. If he is stressed you need to continue to work on making his crate a safe and friendly place for him.

- Training should be short intervals (3 to 5 min.) at least 3 times a day.
- Training should be in a quiet area of the house with minimal distractions.
- Training sessions should end on a positive note.
- With the door open place your puppy’s food bowl inside the crate at feeding times.
- The crate should always be seen as a positive area for your puppy.

Remember have FUN with your puppy during the training sessions.