



CRATE TRAINING

Crate training is essential to the pet and working dog owner alike. It is an aid to training, not a long-term confinement area. The crate enables the owner to secure the family home from damage and protect children during times when the owner cannot provide full time supervision. As the dog ages it provides a 'safe haven' and a place of solitude for rest and peace away from the family when it chooses to be alone. It is not a place of punishment.

Crate training allows for safe transportation in vehicles and may provide temporary accommodation for the dog whilst on family holidays, visiting friends for example, allowing the dog to become a constant companion.

Crate training is a stimulus to focus. Focus is required for training. The crate provides the following benefits with no detriment if used appropriately:

- Security at the home and whilst travelling.
 - The canine is a 'den' dwelling animal in the wild. The crate provides a suitable place where it can be safe and secure in an acclimatised environment.
- The primary use for a crate is housetraining. Canines don't like to soil their dens.
- A place where the animal can be confined when the owners require 'quiet time' or when busy doing other things that require their full attention.
- The crate provides solitary confinement, which provides for enhanced focus to the handler and for training / work when released.
 - A period of rest and confinement prior to work or training increases motivation and drive.
- In an environment where more than one canine is being trained it allows one dog to be worked whilst in view of the others that are confined. This motivates the crated animals to work when released and allows the handler to concentrate solely on one animal at a time.

Correct application of crate training will maximize motivation and focus to the handler and to task.

A crate isn't a magical solution. If not used correctly, a dog can feel trapped and frustrated, which will adversely affect working ability.

- Never use the crate as a punishment. Your dog will come to fear it and refuse to enter it.
- Don't leave your dog in the crate too long. A dog that's crated day and night doesn't get enough exercise or human interaction and can become depressed or anxious.
- Puppies under six months of age shouldn't stay in a crate for more than three or four hours at a time. They can't control their bladders and bowels for that long. The same applies to adult dogs that are being housetrained. Physically, they can hold it, but they don't know they're supposed to.
- The canine 'must' be taken to 'relief' areas as soon as released from the crate.
- Reinforce the canine for entering the crate and periodically in it, only when settled.



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- Crate your dog only when necessary,
 - At night
 - When at work
 - Periods in the day when your full attention is required elsewhere
 - Feeding
 - At family meal times, whilst cooking and eating.

Selecting a crate

Several types of crates are available:

- Plastic
- This is the preferred type as it is required for transportation by air.
- If more than one dog is crated this type allows for solitude.
- Fabric on a collapsible, rigid frame
- Collapsible, metal pens

Crates come in differing sizes and may be purchased at most pet supply stores or through Internet outlets. The size of crate should conform to airline standards, which may be found on airline web sites. The size of the crate selected should be appropriate for the adult size of the breed.

The crate training process

Crate training can take days or weeks, depending on your dog's age, temperament, and past experiences. It's important to keep two things in mind while crate training:

- The crate should always be associated with something pleasant.
- Reinforce when entering and when settled.
- Training should take place in a series of small steps.

Preparation

In the initial stages of training the crate should be prepared so that the rear 2/3 are for sleeping with bedding provided, the front 1/3 should be lined with newspaper for soiling. The newspaper provides a conduit for relief training. The dog will become accustomed to relieving on newspaper, which may be placed in outdoor areas to encourage relief in certain appropriate areas of the property.

Water should be provided but in such an amount so as not to cause continual drinking and thus excessive urination. The container should be attached to the inside of the door, to avoid spillage in the bed area, above ground level at a height that the dog / puppy can drink with all four legs on the ground.

Avoid placing items in the crate that may be destroyed and parts swallowed that may cause choking when isolated.

Placement

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The crate is portable, this allows for the crate to be sited in areas appropriate to the lifestyle of the family. In general the crate is best placed in a quiet area of the home, close by an exit leading to relief area. The area should be well ventilated at an ambient temperature that is not so cold or hot so as to cause discomfort.

Introduce your dog to the crate

Place the crate in an area of your house or workplace where people spend a lot of time and there is movement. Put a soft blanket or towel in the crate. Take the door off and let the dog explore the crate at his leisure. Feed in the crate. Throw the occasional treat into the crate, the canine should enter, consume and leave, do not chastise for leaving. Some dogs will be naturally curious and start sleeping in the crate right away. If yours isn't one of them:

- Bring him over to the crate, and talk to him in a happy tone of voice. Make sure the crate door is open and secured so that it won't hit your dog and frighten him.
- Encourage your dog to enter the crate by dropping some small food treats nearby, then just inside the door, and finally, all the way inside the crate. If he refuses to go all the way in at first, that's okay; don't force him to enter.
- Continue tossing treats into the crate until your dog will walk calmly all the way into the crate to get the food. If he isn't interested in treats, try tossing a favourite toy in the crate. This step may take a few minutes or as long as several days.
- Feed your dog his meals in the crate
 - After introducing your dog to the crate, begin feeding him his regular meals near the crate. This will create a pleasant association with the crate.
 - When your dog is readily entering the crate, place the food dish all the way at the back of the crate.
 - If he remains reluctant to enter the crate, put the dish only as far inside as he will readily go without becoming fearful or anxious. Each time you feed him, place the dish a little further back in the crate.
 - Once your dog is standing comfortably in the crate to eat his meal, you can close the door while he's eating. The first time you do this, open the door as soon as he finishes his meal. With each successive feeding, leave the door closed a few minutes longer, until he's staying in the crate for ten minutes or so after eating.
- Be aware that some dogs wish to 'relieve themselves' immediately following eating.
- If he begins to whine to be let out, you may have increased the length of time too quickly. Next time, try leaving him in the crate for a shorter time period. If he does whine or cry in the crate, don't let him out until he stops. Otherwise, he'll learn that the way to get out of the crate is to whine, so he'll keep doing it.

Relief training

Puppies will take relief in the crate; this cannot be avoided in the first instance. Only regular removal from the crate and being carried to an appropriate relief area until the task is completed will condition the puppy to wait until it is outside. Avoid releasing a puppy from the crate expecting it to hold relief until outside, it will not, it will take the first opportunity to do so. Use an appropriate command and reinforce the behaviour with verbal praise when



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the task is completed. This may well take a great amount of patience on the part of the owner. Be prepared with an umbrella and warm coat! You will soon become aware of the relief habits of the dog and may predict when relief is due. (After feeding, when awakening from sleep, for example). Never place the dog in the crate without first allowing an opportunity of relief.

Lengthen the crating periods

After your dog is eating his regular meals in the crate with no sign of fear or anxiety, you can confine him there for short time periods while you're home or in the workplace.

- Call him over to the crate and give him a treat.
- Give him a command to enter, such as "kennel." Encourage him by pointing to the inside of the crate with a treat in your hand.
- After your dog enters the crate, praise him, give him the treat, and close the door.
- Sit quietly near the crate for five to ten minutes, and then go into another room for a few minutes. Return, sit quietly again for a short time, and then let him out of the crate.
- Repeat this process several times a day, gradually increasing the length of time you leave him in the crate and the length of time you're out of his sight.
- Once your dog will stay quietly in the crate for about 30 minutes with you mostly out of sight, you can begin leaving him crated when you're gone for short time periods and/or letting him sleep there at night.

Crate your dog when you leave

After your dog can spend about 30 minutes in the crate without becoming anxious or afraid, you can begin leaving him crated for short periods when you leave the house.

- Put him in the crate using your regular command and a treat.
- Vary at what point in your "getting ready to leave" routine you put your dog in the crate. Although he shouldn't be crated for a long time before you leave, you can crate him anywhere from five to 20 minutes prior to leaving.
- Don't make your departures emotional and prolonged—they should be matter-of-fact. Praise your dog briefly, give him a treat for entering the crate, and then leave quietly.

When you return home, don't reward your dog for excited behavior by responding to him in an excited, enthusiastic way. Keep arrivals low key to avoid increasing his anxiety over when you will return. Walk calmly to the crate and allow the canine to exit, immediately taking to 'break' area for relief. Continue to crate your dog for short periods from time to time when you're home so he doesn't associate crating with being left alone.

Crate your dog at night

- Put your dog in the crate using your regular command and a treat. Initially, it may be a good idea to put the crate nearby in a hallway, especially if you have a puppy. Puppies often need to go outside to eliminate during the night, and you'll want to be

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able to hear your puppy when he whines to be let outside. Older dogs, too, should initially be kept nearby so they don't associate the crate with social isolation.

- Once your dog is sleeping comfortably through the night with his crate near you, you can begin to gradually move it to the location you prefer, although time spent with your dog—even sleep time—is a chance to strengthen the bond between you and your canine.

Moving to outside kennel

- Once the puppy is crate trained you may wish that the canine should reside outside in a kennel.
- This is achieved by moving the crate into the kennel, initially for short periods, and then building up the time until the canine is settled overnight. The door may then be opened to allow access to the whole kennel. Once this is achieved the crate may be removed.

Removal of the crate

There is no reason why you should not utilise a crate for the life of the dog. Once trained, you will find that regular use will condition the dog to be comfortable within it. The crate may well become the place of choice for rest periods and it will not be necessary to close the door.

If the owner wishes to remove the crate, the advice offered is that a purpose made dog bed is placed in the crate so that the dog becomes accustomed to it. It is then moved outside the crate, and through training systems the dog is conditioned to sleep and rest on the bed away from the crate. Once conditioned, the crate may be removed and the dog will simply lie on its bed. During this period of conditioning the dog is trained to go to its bed upon command.

Owners should be aware that if the dog were conditioned to lay on the sofa with its owner, this would become the preferred place to rest, even when the owner is not present. This behaviour is difficult to extinguish once conditioned.

Transportation in vehicles

The crate may be secured in a vehicle allowing for the safe transportation of pet and working dogs. In a road collision unsecured dogs in vehicles may cause injury to human occupants, as they will be thrown around the interior at the time of impact. Post impact the animal may escape from the vehicle and be at large on the carriageway presenting great danger to other road users.

Recently acquired puppies and adult dogs should be conditioned to vehicular travel on short journeys. The vehicle should always be driven in a manner considerate of the animals comfort and well being. Avoid sudden and harsh braking / acceleration and excessive GeForce when cornering.

Abingdon



TRAINING CLUB

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DO NOT LEAVE ANIMALS IN VEHICLES IN DIRECT SUNSHINE WHERE THE TEMPERATURE IN THE VEHICLE IS LIKELY TO RISE ABOVE SURVIVABLE LIMITS. THIS MAY OCCUR DURING ANY SEASON, NOT ONLY IN SUMMER MONTHS.

Potential problems

- **Whining.** If your dog whines or cries while in the crate at night, it may be difficult to decide whether he's whining to be let out of the crate, or whether he needs to be let outside to eliminate. If you've followed the training procedures outlined above, then your dog hasn't been rewarded for whining in the past by being released from his crate. If that is the case, try to ignore the whining. If your dog is just testing you, he'll probably stop whining soon. Yelling at him or pounding on the crate will only make things worse.
If the whining continues after you've ignored him for several minutes, use the phrase he associates with going outside to eliminate. If he responds and becomes excited, take him outside. This should be a trip with a purpose, not play time. If you're convinced that your dog doesn't need to eliminate, the best response is to ignore him until he stops whining. Don't give in; if you do, you'll teach your dog to whine loud and long to get what he wants. If you've progressed gradually through the training steps and haven't done too much too fast, you'll be less likely to encounter this problem. If the problem becomes unmanageable, you may need to start the crate training process over again.
- **Separation anxiety.** Attempting to use the crate as a remedy for separation anxiety won't solve the problem. A crate may prevent your dog from being destructive, but he may injure himself in an attempt to escape from the crate. Separation anxiety problems can only be resolved with counter-conditioning and desensitisation procedures.