

Crate Training and Your Dog

The thrill of a new puppy can quickly diminish when he leaves puddles on the carpet. Few puppies are housebroken when they leave their littermates and arrive at their new homes. It is pointless to punish a pup, which is at the developmental stage of a baby, for doing what comes naturally. With **crate** training, however, you can incorporate your pup's natural instincts and expedite the housebreaking process.

Although he may fuss at first, your puppy will soon associate his **crate** as his special retreat, a place where he can find peace from the outside world and a place to hide personal toys. A **crate** is your dog's private room -- like a den in your house.

Why does crate training work?

A **crate** may look like a cage, but for your puppy it represents a den. When dogs were wild, they slept in shallow holes, or dens, which provided protection from predators. The crate provides your puppy a den-like environment. It is a place where he can go for peace and privacy. Since your dog has a natural instinct to keep his den clean, he will try to relieve himself as far away from his den/crate as possible.

During a puppy's first few months in his new home he will need almost constant supervision in order to avoid making mistakes. Since you can't watch your puppy constantly, a crate makes it possible to prevent accidents from happening in the first place.

If you select the crate training method, you must make commitment to let your puppy out on a regular schedule. If you work all day and do not have a yard or paper covered room where the puppy can stay while you are out, you may want to consider getting an older dog that is already housebroken.

How do I crate train my puppy?

First you need to purchase a **crate**. Most are made from **heavy-duty plastic, steel mesh**, or a combination of both. Prices generally run from \$35 to \$125 for a good quality crate. Choose one that is sturdy but light-weight. Quality varies, so be sure the crate will be able to withstand chewing and years of use.

The crate you select should be big enough for the dog to stand up, turn around and to stretch out on its side and sleep. For housebreaking purposes, you may want to purchase one that has dividers that can be removed as your puppy grows.

Of course, it's best to have the crate before you bring your puppy home. Each time your puppy makes a mistake indoors, it becomes that much harder to enforce the idea that elimination is suppose to occur outside. Remember, if a puppy makes a mistake in your home, it is the result of your error, not his. Do not spank, scream, or push his nose in the mess. Instead, take the puppy to his toilet area outside immediately. It's up to you to make sure the puppy is taken outside regularly and that he is properly supervised indoors. (Keep an easily accessible leash by the door.)

In the beginning, your puppy should only be expected to stay in the cage for two hours intervals and overnight. When you take the puppy out of the cage, put him on his leash and take him to his bathroom spot. The leash will help him learn to relieve himself under your supervision.

Always take the puppy to the same place. Do not start playtime until he has done his duty. As he relieves himself you may want to quietly repeat a special code word that he will come to associate with doing his business. Once he has performed properly, lavish the pup with praise and start playtime.

If he doesn't relieve himself within 10 minutes, bring him inside and put him back in the crate for 15 to 20 minutes. Then try again. Keep this routine up until the desired objective is achieved and then praise him as if he had just won an Olympic gold medal.

To be on the safe side, you may want to restrict the area in your home where the puppy is allowed to wander. If you confine the pup to rooms with washable floors, you won't run the risk of ruining your carpets.

Take your pup out after meals, naps or after drinking heavily from his water bowl. A typical sign that it's time to go out is when he starts looking restless or turns circles while sniffing the ground.

When it is time to go back in the crate, give him a reward. Or even put the treat inside the crate. Make sure the crate has a soft blanket to cuddle up on and rotate toys so your puppy won't be bored.

Don't be alarmed if your puppy whines and cries the first few times you put him in the crate and never let the puppy out while he is raising a ruckus. If you do, your pup will learn that howling gets results. Be strong and resist temptation to succumb to your puppy's demands. After the tantrum, he'll direct his attention towards a toy or a nap.

If you have been consistent and conscientious, your puppy should not have any accidents by the time he is five months old. If he does, discuss the problem with your vet. Your puppy may be suffering from internal parasites, a bladder infection or other medical problem.