

CRATE TRAINING

Crate training is wonderful for the dogs and for the owners. The training process is similar for pups and for older dogs. Pups have specific aspects to be considered. Older dogs that have never experienced a crate OR have had a negative experience with crates will require some specific considerations. However, the basic principles apply across the board.

The crates need to be 'large' enough to allow the pup/dog to stand, turn, and lay down comfortably. The crates need to be 'small' enough so they do NOT allow for BOTH a living area and a potty area...this would compromise the housebreaking process. The length of time the dogs are crated should be reasonable and coupled with ample DAILY opportunities for EXERCISE and PLAY!!! Pups/dogs do not want to soil the area where they sleep and eat. They may have a couple of accidents, but they will quickly realize this is not a good plan...YUK! If your dog has repeated accidents and you are doing ALL the right things, you will need to have the pup/dog checked for possible physical problems.

Pups/dogs like to have their OWN place/den. The crating (if handled properly & fairly) provides this to them. The crating will greatly benefit the housetraining process. Also, it will save the pup/dog and you from unnecessary stress due to 'destructive' behavior.

Dogs should NEVER be crated as punishment or banishment. We want them to like their crate and this would make the crate a 'bad' place for the dogs. If you leave your pup/ dog crated for an inordinate amount of time...this is CRUEL. If you do not follow the regimen of ensuring they have pottied 'before' being crated, this is cruel. They will HAVE to go... they will try so hard NOT to mess their crate. Unfortunately, they will 'physically' have no option and the emotional trauma of this is indescribable. Additionally, if a pup/dog is repeatedly 'forced' to go potty in their crate and then lay in it...this becomes a health concern... coupled with the emotional anxiety.

Here are some helpful hints that will help in your use of the crate:

- 1) Make sure you have the correct size crate...neither too large OR too small.
- 2) Be reasonable in the length of time your pup/dog is crated.
- 3) Make sure the pup/dog has ample exercise/play sessions. It is recommended that they have a 'play/walk session' in the morning and in the evening.
- 4) Make sure the pup/dog potties just before being crated.
- 5) Feed the dog with 'enough time' to potty them before crating. For pups this may be 15-30 min. For older dogs, this could be 30 min. to one hour. If you feed your dog & crate them immediately, they will not have had an opportunity to 'eliminate' fully. It takes a little while for the food and/or water to work through their system. If you crate them before this process has completed...they will HAVE to go after being crated.
- 6) Do not leave food or water in the crate. If they eat or drink while crated, they will

have to potty. If you must leave water, put a few ice cubes in their dish to melt. This will prevent them from drinking a large amount at one time.

- 7) Put a T-shirt you have slept in or worn in the crate. This will be comforting because this will provide your 'scent' in their crate. I recommend having a couple of scented T-shirts, so you can change them out if they do become soiled OR just to give a fresh scented one.

AT NIGHT SUGGESTIONS:

- 1) Do not leave a toy in the crate at night. If they wake up during the night and play with the toy, this will stimulate their system & they will have to potty.
- 2) It is recommended that the crate be in your bedroom for night sleep.
- 3) Pick up the water an hour before bedtime. Same concept as removing water from a child before bedtime.
- 4) All pups/ dogs should be crated at night...UNTIL they are reliable in the potty and destructive behavior areas.

You can help prevent or minimize separation anxiety by not making a big deal when you crate and leave or return to the pup/dog. This means, when you crate them and you are going to leave... do not interact with them 'just' prior to you leaving. Don't tell them that Mom/Dad will be right back or you be good, whatever. Just no big production at all. By the same token, when you return...do not overly interact with the pup/dog until they have been let out to go potty. Then, you can let them know how spectacular it is to be home and be with them. Now, this process can be modified...but, the premise is that too much interaction BEFORE you leave will increase their anxiety and anticipation of you leaving...being left alone! The over interaction immediately when you RETURN...will only reinforce that being left alone is stressful... especially, when compared to the wonderful outpouring of emotions when Mom/Dad returns. This will only INCREASE their anxiety while you are away...they will become 'obsessed' with Mom/Dad returning.

Leaving a TV or Radio on will help keep them company and not feel so alone. Be sure to turn one of these ON at different time intervals BEFORE you leave...so, they don't learn that this is the SIGN that you are going to leave them. Giving them toys, the cube toys to work to get their treats out of, or a bone stuffed with peanut butter or cheese smushed in the ends will provide hours of entertainment, will occupy them, and will be self rewarding.

INTRODUCING YOUR PUP/DOG TO THE CRATE:

Start slow and positive. Take a treat and toss it into the crate, say 'kennel'. The pup/dog will go in after it (or stretch their head in just enough to get it). When they get the treat, QUICKLY praise them. You want to make certain you praise them when they get any part of their body into the crate for the treat. If you are 'late' on the praise, you will be praising them for EXITING the crate. They must be praised for being IN the crate...NOT exiting the crate. Do this several times. Then when they go in for the treat...praise and push the

door of the crate closed (do not latch). You will immediately open the door. Repeat this process several times...always being careful to praise while they are IN the crate. NEVER praise/treat as they exit. Decide on a command word...kennel or whatever. Use this each time you want the pup/dog to go into their crate.

GRADUALLY, increase the length of time you keep the door pushed closed. As this time increases, praise the dog while they are in the crate and give them another treat while they are IN the crate. The next phase is to actually latch the door shut. Praise and treat while they are IN the crate with the door latched. Build the time that you keep the door latched very slowly. This is teaching the pup/dog that the crate is a great place where they are praised and get treats. NEVER PRAISE ON THEIR EXIT. They are also learning that the crate is not a TRAP and the door always OPENS!!! Now, of course the amount of time before the door opens varies and will ultimately be lengthy....BUT, they will have solidly learned that they will always 'get out' of the crate. To make this phase even more fun and reinforcing, while they are in the crate have the pup/dog SIT...then, treat and praise. This makes it a real activity for them. You will actually see the dog start to 'offer' the behavior. They will go into the crate on their own, turn and SIT...waiting for their praise and treat!!!!

The next phase will have you doing the above steps and while the crate door is closed, you will walk across the room...with your back to the pup/dog. Pick up a book or look at something that shows you are involved in something OTHER than them. Initially, you can praise with your back turned. Ultimately, you will walk away, back turned, thumb through a book, say nothing....then, very nonchalantly return to the pup/dog. At this point, give them a treat and praise them. Only AFTER you have given them a treat and praised them, do you open the crate door.

This process may seem very time consuming and IT IS!!! However, if you are taking on the enormous responsibility of a pup/dog...you must be willing to devote the time and effort that will make their life and your life with them REWARDING. The amount of time you will spend crate training your pup/dog is minimal when compared to the amount of time they will be spending in their crate. This can be a wonderful thing for your pup/dog OR it can be UNFAIR or CRUEL. The choice is yours. Compare these options to leaving the untrained pup/dog OUT loose, the TRAUMA they and you will endure each time you return home and they have pottied in the house OR been destructive.

PLEASE TAKE THE TIME & EFFORT to properly crate train you pup/ dog. Give them the chance to experience the safety, security, and self confidence a crate provides them. Let the crate HELP and make the housetraining process easier. SAVE them and you from having to go through the daily anguish associated with potty accidents and natural destructiveness that will occur if they are left out loose (even in a confined area). WE place the pup/dog in OUR environment. We expect them to live by OUR rules. We owe it to the pup/dog to give them what they need to adapt to our world and the rules we impose on them. And, many of our rules and our environment actually contradict many of the pup/dog's innate...natural behaviors. They will adapt and they will conform.....IF, WE WILL ONLY BE FAIR AND GIVE THEM THE CHANCE TO LEARN WHAT WE WANT!

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