



## Crate Training

The use of a crate when dealing with a puppy can be an invaluable tool. A lot of owners go on to use a crate well in to adulthood.

It is crucial that a crate is introduced correctly. If a positive association is created right from the start it will ensure that the crate can be used effectively in a variety of situations.

- It can be used to keep the puppy (and house!) safe when unable to be supervised ie stops them from chewing up electric cables etc
- It can be used to help with toilet training (see toilet training)
- It can be used to help unwanted behaviours being practiced
- It can be used as a 'safe haven' ie to give the pup a break from small children and visa versa
- It will get the pup use to being kennelled in places such as the vets, groomers etc
- It can be used in a car to ensure the pup remains comfortable and safe on car journeys

In the day, the crate can be put in the main area of the house to get them use to household noises and sights.

At night it can be placed, initially, in the bedroom to ensure the puppy feels secure and safe. This will also help to toilet train them.

A lot of puppies like the crate to be covered so it creates more of a den environment. The crate should be large enough for the pup to stand up and lie down flat comfortably. It should not be too large otherwise toilet training can be compromised. If you have a larger breed then you may have to hire or purchase several crates if you want to continue to use it into adult hood or, get a large one initially but it will need to be partitioned off to ensure it is the correct size at all times.

### **How to introduce a crate:**

The crate should ALWAYS be a place where good things happen.

It should never be used as a punishment if you were to give the pup a 'time out'

It should never be over used and abused. Pups should not be crated longer than 2 to 3 hours at a time during the day.

A crate should be introduced slowly. It should be made into a fun 'game ' to start with and training sessions should be kept short. This will ensure a positive association is created.

1. When you first erect the crate, secure the door open to ensure it does not get knocked and scare the pup. Scatter some treats around the crate and a few just inside the door. Allow the pup to investigate at his own pace. Do not force the pup at any point or shut the door if he enters of his own accord. Just sit nearby and praise him for being near/in the crate. Do this over several sessions especially if you have a

particularly sensitive and shy pup who is a little intimidated. Only move to the next step when your pup is comfortable and confident around the crate. Very bold pups may show no fear at all and you could move on quite quickly.

2. Gradually start putting the treats farther in to the crate once he has initially entered to encourage him all the way in. Again do not force this. As the pup gains in confidence he will do it himself at some point. This should be repeated over several sessions. Once the pup seems comfortable with entering the crate fully you can move on to the next step.
3. Once the pup is happily entering the crate fully, start hand feeding him whilst he is inside to encourage him to remain in there for a short spell. At first give several treats rapidly in a row. Allow the pup to exit if he so wishes but do not give any food treats outside the crate. Repeat over a few sessions
4. At any point that the pup enters the crate of his own accord you can now 'click' and reward with a treat. Sometimes give several in a row to encourage him to remain in the crate for a short period.
5. Next, try closing the door once the pup has entered and then feed more treats through the door in rapid succession for a short period. Then open the door to let him out. The sequence should look something like this- pup enters of his own accord, 'click' and give several treats for being in the crate. Then shut the door and give several more treats through the door, open the door, feed a few more treats with the door open (This is to ensure the pup does not just run out as door is opening) and then stop feeding. The pup will most likely exit.
6. It is at this point that commands can be added if you so wish. As the pup is entering the crate, say your command. You can use what ever command you so wish but here are a couple of examples: 'in your crate' or 'in your bed'. Then 'click' and treat etc. Another command worth using is a release command. Just before the pup exits the crate use a word such as 'o.k'. This should be done after the door is open but before the dog actually exits (i.e after you have fed a few more treats with the door open.) After you have said 'o.k' stop feeding and walk away from the crate.
7. Gradually increase the amount of time the pup remains in the crate with the door closed. You should vary the amount of time so that that sometimes it is short duration and sometimes long. At this stage you are still feeding treats and remaining by the crate
8. The next step is to try getting the pup comfortable whilst you move away from the crate. Once the pup has entered the crate and is happy with you feeding treats through the door, try taking ONE step away, 'click' and immediately return and feed. Gradually build up how many steps you take before 'clicking', returning and treating. Do not rush this process. At any point that the pup seems distressed, go back to taking less steps or even remaining by the crate for a few sessions before trying again.

The aim is to get your pup happily entering and remaining in the crate with the door closed for gradually longer and longer periods. This whole process can take a bit of time with some pups especially if they have had a bad experience in a crate at some point. If the pup seems distressed at any of the steps outlined above, just go back a stage and wait until the pup seems happy again before moving on.

There are other things you can also do **once** the pup has been happily introduced to the crate

- Start putting your sleepy pup in the crate and wait with him until he is asleep. Close the door. Once awake immediately open the door and let him out to go to the toilet
  - Start getting them use to being in the crate alone whilst they are occupied with their dinner, a tasty stuffed kong or bone or an interactive toy. This should be done when the pup is in a calm mood and maybe ready for a nap.
1. Put the pup in its crate with its dinner, toy etc to occupy him
  2. Very matter of factly go about your business but at this stage remain in the room and close to the crate if necessary. If at any point the pup stops what he is doing and looks for you, go back and just reassure him by opening the door and stroking for a few seconds. Then close the door and repeat. Continue until the pup is fully absorbed in the toy etc or settles to sleep (You may have to stay at this stage for several sessions or you may be able to move on quite quickly)
  3. Once fully distracted, try leaving the room very briefly. Go back in and IF the pup is looking for you just go and reassure as you did before. Repeat. Keep going in and out of the room until the pup takes little notice of your comings and goings
  4. Gradually increase and vary the amount of time you are out of the room.
  5. If your pup falls asleep, leave him until he wakes and then immediately let him out to go to the toilet
  6. If your pup does not fall asleep and has finished with whatever has been occupying him, end the session and take him out to go to the toilet.

Increasing the amount of time your pup is left alone in the crate should be done over several sessions. The aim is to ensure your pup does not get distressed and begins to understand that you do come back!