

## Crate Training

I admit when I first heard of crate training I had visions of pathetic animals caged in a zoo. I can only say I was wrong in my assumptions. I have researched and advocate this method of teaching to our canine friends. I have heard countless people tell me that they would never have another puppy without this method of training.

### *Here's why*

Dogs in the wild live in a den. The den provides a wild dog protection from predators and the elements. It provides them a great deal of security and psychological satisfaction. All dogs, therefore, have a strong natural tendency to seek out this type of shelter.

In your home, your dog has no such place to call his own. Therefore, he makes feeble attempts to curl up under the coffee table, chairs, or in corners. By "giving them back their den" in our domestic homes we can take advantage of mother nature and quickly housebreak, control chewing, and actually raise a well adjusted, self-confident dog, and keep him safe from just about anything.

### *Here's how*

Simply start from early puppyhood and have the little guy sleep and rest in his home. Almost without trying he will train himself to seek security and comfort inside this little "dog room". If necessary, toss a little treat in the home to encourage him to go in on his own. Don't force him. Coax him with food and reward him with praise. He may quickly back out, or be very shy at first - that's normal. Just take it slow and he'll soon go in on his own.

At first, don't close the door on him. Let him get comfortable with going in and out on his own. Once he is happy and unafraid of the new home, simply restrain him at the door with your hand. Make him stay in the home for a few minutes, then gradually increase the time and be sure to praise him.

Once he's comfortable with this, probably a few hours or days of short training sessions, restrain him at the door WITH the door - again praising him lavishly. Soon, he will be very secure in his home with the door closed. Slowly you can get farther and farther away from him while he is home, always praising his accepting behavior. Eventually the pup will sit quietly and sleep in his home with the door closed.

I recommend that during all unsupervised times simply close the door so he stays in his home. During times when someone can supervise him, have him out to play and train as much as you like. While he is inside his home, he should not urinate or defecate. This is Mother Nature's way of keeping the home clean. He won't feel isolated either because the home provides essential visibility and ventilation...just like a baby in a playpen. Understand that little puppies have to "go" about every 2-4 hours when they are young. So what do you do? On a schedule, you let the little guy out, teach him the route to the door, praise him at the door and take him out to the part of the yard you want him to "go". Very quickly you are teaching him an elimination schedule that will stay with him the rest of his life.

As the puppy gets older, around 4-6 months, you can gradually leave him in his home for longer periods of time, and of course, gradually he can "hold it" longer. Never leave your puppy or adult dog in his home all day long. I recommend leaving him in his home no longer than two hours at a time. Anything beyond this is just cruel in my opinion. When your dog is an adult, you will probably just keep the door open all the time. Now your dog is house broken and he will have access to his home whenever he wants.

## Other benefits of crate training

### *Chewing*

Other benefits of this kind of training include controlling your puppy's normal and natural tendency to chew everything in sight. When he is confined, your pup cannot reach inappropriate objects like furniture or shoes. In order to help focus normal puppy chewing on approved objects, play with him using his toys. With problem chewers, try to avoid any "tug-of-war" games; this tends to make them more orally fixated. "Go Find" or "Retrieve" are great games that will focus his chewing on appropriate objects.

Don't leave too many toys out at any given time. You may have 20 toys for your new pup, however, only let him have three or four at a time. Leave the rest hidden away in a closet. Then every three weeks or so, rotate them with new ones. This way, the pup has a new "smell" and "feel" to keep him interested in chewing on appropriate items. Also, leave one or two of the approved chew toys in his home during the day. This will further direct his chewing attention on these objects and not your furniture or shoes.

### *Safety*

When family or other visitors come over, it's easy to put your new puppy in his home in order to keep him from being under foot. This also keeps him confined so he won't slip out the door. In the case of protective dogs, it makes your visitors a bit more secure as well.

### *Hospital room or first class cabin*

When your puppy is sick or injured, home becomes his hospital room. When treating pets at home, the whole process is easier if they can be confined. Hot packs, cold packs, movement restriction and giving medications are all easier when the pet is safe in his room.

When you travel, the home becomes his first class seat aboard your car. This keeps him out from under your feet, away from the driver and extra safe in case of an accident. If your dog had to be removed from an accident scene, such a task would be safe and easy if the pet were in his home.

### *Less behavioral problems*

Trained in this manner dogs have less behavioral problems, are more secure and self-confident, easier to obedience train and stay calm when they must be boarded. Because you have taken advantage of this natural instinct since early puppyhood, they are less susceptible to insecurity, nervousness, and anxiety, which cause many objectionable behavior problems.

### *The only way to train a new dog*

Countless new puppy owners say they wouldn't do it any other way. We highly recommend the wire home because it provides good visibility and ventilation, the finish is easy to clean and it looks very nice in the home setting. Crate type homes are cool in summer and a blanket can be draped over it, if necessary to prevent drafts, in the winter.

## **Don'ts**

Don't leave your young puppy in his home all day. At six weeks a pup can last about 4 hours. By 8 weeks – 5 hours, at 12 weeks - 6 hours and by 5-6 months of age a pup should be able to hold his bladder for an 8-hour period of time. However, as stated earlier I strongly believe that leaving an adult dog let alone a puppy alone in his crate for longer than 2 hours at any time is too long.

Don't put housebreaking pads in the pet's home. We are trying to take advantage of the pup's normal instinct not to go in his home.

Don't let your new pup roam through your house unsupervised. Keep your eye on him so that when he sniffs and circles - an indication he is about to go - you can quickly guide him to the door, praise him at the door, guide him outside and praise him for "going" outside.

Don't punish your pup by putting (or forcing) him in his home. Again, your pup's home should be his secure place. It should not be associated with punishment, fear or anything negative.

## **Do's**

Do buy a home large enough for your dog when he grows up. That should be 1½ times his body length as an adult. This gives him adequate room to go in, turn around and lie down. If the home is too big when your pup is small, the pup may eliminate in one corner of the kennel, then go to the other corner for sleeping.

Do get a new pup used to his home gradually. Never put a pup in the crate and leave for a long time. Remember dogs are social creatures and pack animals. They survive the wild because of their pack. You are now the dog's pack. When you leave, it represents stress. The home will foster the security a dog has when in his den. But he still must have you to interact and socialize with.

Do provide soft, washable bedding for the home so it is comfortable and warm. Make the inside of the home as cozy as you can. Keep it clean and flea free.

Do supervise your pup ANYTIME he is free in your home. This supervision is what allows you to direct behavior. Remember pups are blank chalkboards and you do the writing. His chewing, elimination, barking, activity and all behaviors are dependent on your direction. If allowed to be unsupervised, your pup will begin to direct his own schedule and behaviors.

If you see him begin to sniff, circle or crouch as if he is ready to urinate or defecate, quickly tell him "no", drop your shaker can (aluminum can filled with pebbles-taped on top) and guide him gently to the door, ring the bell, praise him at the door and guide him outside to his "elimination spot". When he finishes, praise him lavishly.