

HOUSE-TRAINING MADE EASY



The thought of housebreaking a puppy brings groans to some and complaints of full-blown anxiety attacks from others. But take heart, puppy buyers, housebreaking need not be a difficult or painful experience. With the right approach and some consistent effort, your puppy can be housebroken before you ever dreamed possible. The c-a-g-e is a four-letter word. You don't put family members in a cage. Forget that word, from now on think of the crate, as it is commonly known, as the dogs very own den.



Canine species are den animals. That's why the family dog likes to relax in out-of-the-way places, such as under the kitchen table, under your bed or in the back of a closet- any place that has the feel of a den. On the other hand, a dog with a crate has its very own den-like spot, out of bounds to the people in its life. Dogs derive a feeling of security from being in their crates.

Some animals use cages such as hamsters, gerbils and mice. These animals live their entire lives in cages for their own protection. Your dog is not going to live in its crate. It will rest in it, sleep in it, travel in it, and maybe even eat in it. When it is not doing these things in its den (or crate) it will be with the rest of its "pack"-its people.

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The crates first use is as the dogs' bed, but, it is also an excellent natural training tool. You wouldn't try to raise a baby without a crib. Why not give some thought to providing your puppy with a similar "safe place" while it grows and learns. Providing only a rug or a mat, or an open dog bed, gives a puppy too much freedom to get into trouble. Put to bed in a crate, the pup is protected from such lures as electric cords and your new shoes. A crate will protect both your possessions and your dog.

I really do like dog beds, but most puppies (up to the age of two years or older) chew the pretty ones to pieces. I love the cedar-smelling ones (they inhibit fleas), the attractive baskets and even the cutesy ones for toy breeds. Provide these types of beds only for napping while the dog is a pup. Later you can extend their usefulness but they will never replace the crate. When a dog needs a den, it needs a crate, not a bed.

INTRODUCING THE CRATE

Your pups first experience with its crate should be pleasant. Place the crate on the floor and allow the puppy to check out. Don't force the dog to go inside until it has had time to sniff every corner of the strange object. Prop

the door open and place a few treats just inside the door. As the pup develops more and more courage, toss the treats to the back of the crate so that the pup must go inside to retrieve the goodies.

Line the crate floor with newspaper or a blanket. When the pup is comfortable in the crate, close the door and leave it shut for a few minutes. Let the dog out without ceremony. Repeat the process several times, gradually extending the length of the closed-door sessions.

Danger lurks in every corner of the house, and the curious pup can easily find trouble. Crates prevent disasters from happening.

The pup may complain a time or two about being confined. Do not reward the dog for whining by opening the crate door. There's no need for punishment, but do remain firm. Ignore the protests and they will soon stop. The dog should learn from the start that there's no punishment connected with its bed and that life's more pleasant when it complies with the rules.

If the puppy is at all hesitant about entering the crate, do not forced the pup through the crate door. Try feeding the pup in the crate for a day or two, and cheerfully chat with the dog while its eating. Lure the pup into the crate with its food dish, then put the dish at the front of the crate. The pup will not feel trapped if it faces the open crate door.

When the puppy is comfortable in its crate, you're ready to take advantage of all the wonderful uses for this marvelous invention.

House training with a crate

If you followed this easy schedule, you will find house training is as easy as falling in love with a puppy.

Morning. Let's begin the first thing in the morning, being fully aware that "first thing" may be earlier than you had in mind. Things will get easier as the pup gets older. At the first peep, whine or bark in the morning, open the crate door and immediately carry the smaller pup (attaching the leash as you go) or leash lead the larger one, to the exact spot you want the dog to use. Just stand and let the pup wander about on its leash. This is not a walk, it's a business trip!

Make up a term that means "potty" to the dog. Some common ones are "Potty", "Go pee" or the one that makes me feel better on snowy mornings, "hurry-up!". Once you've chosen a word or phrase, everyone in the family should use it. As the puppy piddles, say "g-o-o-d dog". Follow with more

standing on your part and more exploring on the part of pup, but only in that one small area. If you find you're just staring at each other, move the leash back and forth to get the pup moving again. When the puppy has a bowel movement, give more praise- just an approving "good dog" not a standing ovation- and take the pup back inside.

Using a leash, even inside the fence area or while paper training, has many advantages. You are there to express immediate approval; your dog goes in the place you have chosen; your dog will be at ease to relieve itself on leash away from home. Don't laugh. "Outside" is a good one-word key you for the dog. Do you want to go outside? emphasizing the keyword. The pup will catch on.

If the pup messes in the crate before waking you, don't scold. Set the alarm 15 or 20 minutes earlier and be certain the pup relieves itself before going into the crate at night. You may even try changing its feeding schedule and removing the water a little earlier. This should help the pup to make it through the night. Your goal is prevention, not punishment.

As the pup matures, and when you have time, go for a walk right after the dog has eliminated. Or, if you have a fenced yard, the older pup might like to run around on its own for a while. Then its breakfast time for your canine baby.

Place the dogs food dish and water bowl side-by-side in the crate. Allow 15 to 20 minutes for the dog to dine before removing the dish. Remove it when the time is up whether or not the pup has eaten all the food. Now take the pup back outside to that same spot. Maybe this is really why so many dogs are called "spot". When the pup has eliminated, or, if after five or 10 minutes, it shows no sign of wanting to, play for go for a short walk. Then back to that spot again. It's extremely important to be right there to say "good dog" as the pup eliminates at least for the first couple of weeks. I never said this would be interesting. It is basic puppy training, however, and will last a lifetime.

Now is a good time for some supervised freedom to explore other parts of the house, but only with supervision. In a working household, this may be the weekend luxury. If you're occupied, getting family or self ready to meet the day, place the puppy back in its crate with some chew toys to amuse itself while you finish your own morning rituals.

Daytime. Be sure to monitor your pups activities throughout the day. When the pup sniffs, walks in circles and appears anxious, it's your cue to head to the "potty spot" with the puppy. The success of housebreaking depends on your quick response to the cue. If puppy is successful again and again, it will soon begin to head for "the spot" when it feels the urge. If you can't constantly supervise the puppy, put it in the crate when you're busy. Just

don't let it make a mistake.

If the pup must be left alone, place the crate in a restricted area, such as a kitchen or bathroom with gate across the door, and leave its crate door open. Turn the radio on low, (dogs have super hearing), put some safe toys in the crate and leave just one patch of newspapers on the floor for an emergency. If you put newspapers all over the floor, the pup will decide where to go, which could be just about anywhere. By putting three or four thickness of newspaper in one spot, maybe beside the outside door, you have taken charge.

If you plan to be gone for only a few hours, take the dog outside to eliminate before you leave. Then put the dog in the crate with a small treat and a couple of toys. Latch the crate door, turn the radio on and leave. (Just take off. No speeches!). If you'll be gone more than two hours, confine the young pup in a restricted area as described above. Older dogs can remain in their crates a little longer, ask us for an opinion on how long your pup can be expected to go without urinating or defecating

When you return, immediately take the puppy out to it's very own spot.

(If you live in a city, and curb the pup, let's hope you've chosen a "no parking" area for that spot, and remember to carry clean-ups with you!).

Bedtime. The young pup's last meal should be no later than 8 p.m. followed by a drink of water. Then remove the water bowl. A hour or so before your bedtime, take the pup out for the last time. Put the crate in your bedroom before putting the dog to bed for the night. Then put the puppy in its crate with a toy and plain puppy biscuit.

Your mere presence will be comforting, so don't fall into the trap of talking to the pup as you're going to bed, or it will try to stay up to keep you company!. If you go about your business of calling a day, the pup will too. Don't fall for that old "ticking clock and hot water bottle" routine either. The pup would surely weaned before you got it, so it doesn't need its mothers heart-beat . All you'll end up with is a destroyed clock, a hot water bottle full of tiny tooth-pricks and a soaking wet puppy. The important thing is that you'll be the there to hear the very first sound that signals the first of many trips outside.

When he put your pup in the crate and say "good night", mean it. No going back to say "good night" later. No response to crying, whining or barking. If you are certain the pup relieved itself before entering the crate. Don't even punish the prop if fusses. You're angry shout of "quiet" is (to the pup), a response to its cries. The puppy reasons that any reply is better than non, so it will be encouraged to keep up. Things will get better each night. A well-socialized puppy will very likely be sound asleep long before you turn out

your light, and you'll be the one staying awake to watch your new pride and joy.

By adhering to a consistent schedule, you can housebreak your puppy in only a few days. But don't rush to brag to your friends. Continue to monitor the pup's actions for several months. If the pup soils your house, be sure to clean the area immediately with a commercial odor-eliminator or a solution of vinegar and water. If the pup is allowed to mark places in the house, it will return again and again to mark that spot. It could even generalize that marking the house is permissible. Do not punish the dog for house-soiling unless you catch the pup in the act of soiling. Otherwise the dog will not understand the reason for the punishment.

Other uses

Car travel. The crate physically protects the dog in the car, but it does far more. It restrains the dog in case of a small fender-bender. In the case of the serious accident, the dog will not be thrown into the windshield or out the window. The dog cannot escape from the car to become lost or even killed. The crate also enables anyone coming to your rescue to remove the dog quickly from the scene. This alone could save time needed to assist people.

Two hundred thousand dogs are killed each year from falling, jumping or being thrown from cars and pickup trucks. A crate secured in the back with some form of protection from the weather means you really care.

Traveling bed. If you travel with your dog, its crate is invaluable. When you take the crate along, the dog identifies with the security of this little piece of home. You can prevent nights of lost sleep if you take the crate with you to the hotel, the campsite or your friends home.

If you must leave the dog for short outings while you're on the road, be sure to leave the dog in its den. You will be a welcome guest if your dog displays good manners. The dog that whines, destroys property or soils the facilities is not likely to receive invitations to return.

If air travel is in your plans, the crate will be the vessel that carries your dog to your destination. If your dog is already crate trained, the trip will be less stressful. A calm dog will not need tranquilizers to travel in a crate.

If a friend volunteers to puppy-sit while you're traveling, the dog's crate can go to the friend's house for this stay. Your friend will appreciate the convenience of having the crate at his or her disposal.

In-home confinement. There are times that the dog is just in the way. If

you're cooking and the dog is under foot, it would be safer in its crate. A dropped pot caused by a in- the- way dog is dangerous to dog and you.

Some friends are just not suited to enjoying your dogs company. Older people and children often better quests when your dog is out of the way. The dog won't mind spending some time in its special place.

Crate training plays a major role in preventing separation anxiety. The stress of being abandoned can cause dogs to chew through doors, walls and carpets if left alone. A correctly crate-trained dog seldom experiences the panic of being left alone, even though it may occasionally try to change your mind about going to work!

For the injured dog, or the dog that is recovering from surgery, the crate will help the healing process. When we advise you to keep the dog quiet and still, the crate provides the way to comply with the instructions.

Once you have discovered all the fine uses for a dog's crate , you will develop an even longer list of uses for. I wouldn't think of owning a dog without having crate for it.

Back to Top

Return to Health Topics