

CRATE TRAINING

Puppies and adult dogs have a natural liking for enclosed sleeping places – think of how often dogs choose to sleep under the table, against a wall or behind the settee. In the wild they would seek out a safe den to sleep and rest up. That is all a crate is. A safe haven where predators could not easily attack them. Once your dog is happy in the crate, he can be left there to prevent soiling and chewing, when you are out for a short time. He can be restrained when the kids play noisy, energetic game, which are not improved by his joining in. He will have a secure familiar bed which can be taken in the car and on holiday or a secure place to stay when visiting relatives or friends.

- The crate should be big enough for your dog to stand up, turn round and stretch out when lying down. If he is a puppy, allow for growth. Partially cover the crate with a blanket or sheet so it is dark, den like and cosy. You can buy readymade covers that fit snugly round the crate. Try not to black out the crate completely.
- If the crate is quite big, section off part of it whilst the puppy is young. This will prevent urinating or defecating in the corners. Initially you may want to put newspaper in half the crate, just in case there is an accident overnight.
- To begin with you will need to leave the crate set up all the time. Later you may prefer not to, and some crates fold flat for easy storage when not in use.
- When left in the crate your dog should be given a safe toy which does not have parts that can be chewed off and swallowed, this will keep him occupied when awake, the puppy also needs soft bedding to sleep on, (for example) vet bed or the equivalent, and water to drink. Get a coop cup for the water which clips or screws on the inside of the crate, which will avoid spills or the puppy playing with the water.
- Initially feed the dog in the crate every day, with the door open. This is an easy way to get him to like it. Throughout the day happily instruct your puppy to go into his crate and reward him with a treat.
- Set the crate up in a quiet corner, and put the dog's bed into it. At this stage, leave the door pinned open, so that the dog is never fastened in by mistake and therefore never gets overly stressed at being confined.
- Soon the dog should happily use the crate voluntarily. When you reach this stage, wait until he goes in for a sleep, and then close the door. Stay in the room, and let him out as he starts to wake up. Then take the puppy outside to toilet and praise him.
- When your dog is used to this routine, leave him for a minute after he wakes up, with you still in the room. Gradually increase the time you can do this. If your dog gets distressed shorten the time on the next attempt. Don't make a big fuss or give lots of attention as this can make your puppy think you are praising him for being distressed and he may behave like this when he wants to come out next time, if possible only open the door when your puppy is calm.
- When you can leave the dog with the door closed for a few minutes, leave the room for a short time but stay in the house. Again, gradually increase the time you are out of sight till you can put the dog into his crate when you go out shopping.
- Your dog should never be left in a crate with a collar on as this can get caught in the mesh/cage and a panicking pup could seriously hurt themselves.

- Remember to always make the crate a positive experience and never used as discipline and the dog will enjoy this 'safe' place as their own if they need any time to themselves.