

How-to & the Importance of Crate-Training!



How to keep your dog (and your stuff) safe while you're gone!

Crate-training is one of the most effective ways of housebreaking a dog, and crates provide dogs with a personal space that offers comfort and security. Dogs will make an effort to avoid eliminating in their crate because they do not want to be near their waste. For some, crates appear to be negative, and seem like a prison for a dog. But keep in mind, while you're away, dogs do enjoy having a small, safe space that is both comfortable and comforting for them.

Crate training is also used to curb destructive behavior. Dogs do sleep most of the time when their owners are away, but 5% of that time away is enough time for your dog to destroy your home. Destructive behavior is often the result of a dog being bored or anxious. The crate should be associated with a calm, enjoyable space. It is often referred to as a sanctuary. Loose dogs can become destructive which can be a health hazard for them as well, as they could ingest a number of household items, parts of a toy, or other toxic materials.

Step One – Find the crate right for your dog. Choose a crate that is the right size for your dog. They should be able to stand, turn around, and stretch out. If the crate is too large, they can use the bathroom on one end and still avoid the waste. Start with a metal wire crate. If your dog has trouble adjusting to it, try a plastic “airline crate” instead. Be sure to check yard sales and Craigslist for used crates in order to save some cash!

Step Two – Pick its place in the house. Keep the crate in a common living area during the day. This lets the dog be part of your daily activities but not be interfering with them. If possible, bring the crate to the bedroom when you go to sleep. This gives the dog a chance to still sleep near you while still having a place of their own.

Step Three – Make it their own happy place! Probably the most important thing in a dog being in their crate is that they have safe high-valued items in there with them. At the start of crate-training for when you are going away, a shirt or towel with your scent can help keep your dog settled. Toys, such as stuffed Kong toys, Bento balls, Wobblers, will keep your dog occupied. It also gives them a reason to want to be in the crate. For some dogs, when going through crate training, they can receive their meals in the crate as well.

Remember, it might not be easy at first!

The crate should *never be used as punishment*. This does need to be a safe, happy place for your dog. If the dog is put in their crate when they used the bathroom inside, or if there were up on the counter stealing food, and you put them in the crate, they will start to associate the crate in a negative way. The crate can be used as a time-out, which would be used in cases of the dog becoming unruly and repeatedly disruptive towards people, or even towards other dogs, but always try to keep associations with the crate positive. When in the crate, it is very important that they have safe items to keep them busy.

Dogs may bark or whine while in the crate, especially at the beginning of crate training. It is best to ignore this behavior. It does not mean the dog has separation anxiety (although, it can be an early warning sign). If the behavior is acknowledged, even if it is negative, it is still attention. If the dog is let out of the crate while they're in this state, you have taught them that barking or throwing a tantrum gets them out. For new puppies, or dogs going through crate training, when the dog is whining or crying excessively (especially overnight), take the dog immediately outside to see if the cry is a signal that the dog needs to relieve him/herself. After going outside for potty, bring the dog right back into the crate to resume sleeping.

You want to keep your dog safe. In cases of extreme separation anxiety, a dog may destroy the crate to get out. This could result in injury. Consult with a trainer, vet or veterinary behaviorist for the best course of action for these behaviors.



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