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How to Crate Train your Puppy

By PuppyBeing.com

Many first-time dog owners feel uncomfortable locking up their dog in a crate. However, young puppies are actually quite comfortable with small spaces. In nature, pregnant dogs will seek out or build a small, secluded den to give birth to puppies.

In the wild, a dog does not bed down in the middle of an open field where predators can attack him. The dog finds a tree trunk or cave where he can feel a sense of protection.

Correctly using a crate can satisfy your dog's basic need for security. A puppy can feel quite safe and secure in a crate, once he becomes familiar with it. A crate is also useful (and sometimes necessary) when you travel with your pup.

How to Select the Right Crate Size

A large crate will allow your pooch to use one corner as a toilet and the other corner as a bed. This defeats the purpose of potty training. The crate should only be big enough so your puppy can comfortably stand up straight, turn around and lie down with his legs stretched.

Dogs have a strong natural instinct to not soil the area they sleep in. The right sized crate will trigger this natural instinct in your pup. Your dog will quickly learn bladder and bowel control as he spends time inside the crate.

If you have a large breed puppy that will grow a lot, then it is best to buy a crate with adjustable fencing, otherwise you will have to keep buying bigger crates as your pup grows in size.



Best Crate Location

The crate should only be used as a training device and not as a place for punishment. Your dog should associate only positive emotions with the crate.

Dogs always want to be near their pack. You and your family are your dog's pack. So the crate should be close to you and your family at all times. Place it in the busiest room of your house during the daytime. Move the crate to different rooms of the house as you move around during the day.

At night, for the first two weeks, place the crate close by your bed so your puppy can preferably see you or at least hear you. After two weeks, you can move his crate to the final location where you would be keeping your puppy at night in the long-term.

What to put inside the crate (and what not to)?

Line the floor of the crate with a soft, water-proof and chew-resistant material like a crate pad. Don't put food or water inside the crate. It interferes with the house-training process. Your puppy may also spill the contents inside.

However, you can put a treat-dispensing puzzle feeder inside the crate. This will prevent your pooch from getting bored when he stays inside for extended periods. A KONG is another great toy to put inside the crate that will keep your puppy mentally stimulated during his stay.

Crate Training Guide

Step 1: Crate Introduction

To make your dog comfortable with the crate, place it in a room where he spends a lot of time. Leave the crate door open and let your pup explore the inside and outside of the crate on his own.

If your puppy is hesitant and moves away from the crate, then don't try to force him. Place a few of his favourite toys or his blanket inside the crate. Toss a treat inside the crate. Sit next to the crate and talk to your dog in a pleasant voice. Praise your dog and entice your dog toward the crate. Let your pup take his own time and step inside the crate on his own.

Step 2: Feed inside Crate

After your puppy has become familiar with the crate, the next step is to teach him how to be comfortable staying inside the crate for a short while. The best way is to put the puppy's food bowl inside the crate and let your dog feed with the crate door open.

First, keep the bowl halfway inside the crate so that only your pup's front paws need to be inside while eating. After a couple of days, keep the bowl all the way at the back of the crate. Once he eats comfortably while entirely inside the crate, you can start closing the door just for the time while he is eating.

Initially, you can immediately open the door as soon as he's finished eating. Slowly increase the time you keep the door closed after he's eaten. Work your way up till he can comfortably stay inside the crate for almost 10 minutes after eating.

If your pooch starts whining or barking when closed inside the crate, then you may have progressed too quickly. Tap the crate door gently and say "No" in a firm but gentle voice. Your pup will eventually learn to stop crying when inside the crate.



PRO TIP:

Wait for your puppy to stop whining and only then let him out the crate. If you let your dog out as soon as he cries, then your pup will learn that whining will get him out. And you don't want to teach that habit.

Step 3: Crate for Short Periods

Once your pooch is comfortable eating his meal in the crate and stays inside for a short while afterward without whining, then you can begin crating your dog for short periods when you are at home.

Teach a command to call your puppy to the crate. Entice your puppy to come to the crate with a treat

and then say a simple phrase like "crate up" or "kennel up." Once your dog is inside, give your dog another treat and gently shut the door.

Sit beside the crate quietly for some minutes. Then let your dog out and give another treat and praise your dog. Gradually increase the time for which you keep your puppy inside. Also, move away from the crate while staying in sight of your pooch. Eventually, you will be able to crate your pup and move out of sight for 30 minutes.

When you return to the crate, your dog may get excited and jump around. Don't respond to this and keep it low key.



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Once you are close enough to the crate that your puppy can see you, don't immediately open the crate. Wait for a few minutes and open the crate calmly and casually. When he comes out, praise your dog and take him to the designated toilet spot to eliminate.

Always play with your dog or walk him for a minimum of ten minutes before you put him back inside the crate. Repeat this training every day at the same exact time to build a consistent routine.

PRO TIP:

Daily vary the time between when you close the crate door and when you leave the room (from between 1 minute to 10 minutes). If you crate your pup and leave the room immediately, your puppy may associate crating with being left alone.

Step 4: Crate for Longer Periods

Once your dog can comfortably stay crated for 30 minutes with you out of sight, you can slowly work your way up to leaving for a few hours or even overnight. You can leave the house and come back.



Every time you take your pup outside the crate, take your dog outdoors to eliminate. Use your potty command to stimulate your pooch to go potty. Don't play with your dog until he eliminates. Even if your dog whines or barks, you must wait till he has eliminated. Otherwise, you are teaching your dog to whine just to get out of the crate and play.

Every puppy has a limit to how long they can stay crated. Dogs require frequent social interaction. Don't keep your dog crated for more than 6 hours at a stretch (except overnight).

PRO TIP:

If you will be gone for over 6 hours, then have a friend come home and take out the pup to eliminate. Or leave your dog at a doggie daycare.

Plan Your Pup's Training Schedule

Puppies younger than 6 months need to be fed at least three times a day. After 6 months, you can switch to feeding just twice a day.

Your pup's potty training timetable will be based on his feeding schedule.

Follow these Training Steps Daily

Each time you take your puppy outside the crate, follow the below steps:

1. Take puppy outside on a leash to the designated toilet area.
2. Give the potty command. Stand your ground firmly till your pooch eliminates.
3. Then praise your puppy and give a treat.
4. Take puppy for a walk or play for few minutes.

If you bring your dog inside immediately after he eliminates, he will think that freedom ends as soon as he eliminates. So your dog will hold it in longer.

When you take your pup for a walk or play with your dog afterward, your dog learns that the sooner he completes his potty, the quicker he gets treats, playtime, and fun.



PRO TIP:

Playing with your puppy after he has eliminated teaches your dog that he should toilet as soon as he is outside. Then he gets to walk/play with you longer.



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Sample Daily Crate Training Timetable

Here is a sample timetable for crate training a 6-month-old puppy. You can modify it based on your personal wakeup time, working hours, and bedtime.

Immediately after wake-up (6.00am - 7.00am)	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Take puppy out of crate and follow steps2. Bring indoors and feed breakfast3. Put inside crate
Within an hour of breakfast (7.00am - 8.00am)	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Take puppy out of crate and follow steps2. Bring indoors3. Put inside crate
Midday (11.00am - 12.00pm)	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Take puppy out of crate and follow steps2. Bring indoors3. Put inside crate
Afternoon (3.00pm - 4.00pm)	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Take puppy out of crate and follow steps2. Bring indoors and feed lunch3. Put inside crate
Early Evening (7.00pm - 8.00pm)	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Take puppy out of crate and follow steps2. Bring indoors and don't let puppy drink water anymore for the day3. Put inside crate
Late Evening (Just before bedtime)	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Take puppy out of crate and follow steps2. Bring indoors3. Put inside crate for bedtime

Once you setup a feeding and toilet routine, stick with it for at least a week before you make any changes. This will help your puppy get house trained faster.

After a week of following one routine, you should have a good idea of when your puppy likes to eat and when he likes to eliminate. Based on this information, you can alter the schedule as needed.

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