

Crate Training Your New Dog

Crates can be an positive training tool for your dog. Dogs are ultimately den animals and if introduced appropriately to their crate your dog's crate can be an excellent potty training tool and safe place for your new family member. Many of the older dogs in our rescue used to spending time in crates. Since dogs love a routine they will want to be in their crates until they feel comfortable joining their new family.



Below is a basic "how to" list to help get you started, although it is important to remember that every pup or dog is different so you should consult your veterinarian or a local animal trainer for additional help for your new family member:

- Remember, the crate is supposed to be a safe place for your dog. It should never be used as punishment, nor should it be used around the clock. The age of your new family member will dictate how long they can tolerate time in the crate.
- As a den animal, your new family member will do just about anything to not pee or poop in their dens. Since crate trained dogs consider their crates their dens you can see how successful a housetraining tool your new pup's crate can be.
- Your success can also be increased if you get the correct size and type of crate for your particular pooch. If you are able and happen to have a pup that is still growing it is considered best to start small with your crate and increase the size of crate as your pooch grows. Since not all of us can afford to do that, you could get the largest crate you think you'll need and put a container or barrier in the crate to reduce the possible toilet locations inside the crate. Your new family member should be able to stand, turn around and lie down easily in their crate. You'll want to insure that your new family member won't eat or destroy whatever barrier is placed in the crate. Check with your local pet store or on-line for ideas and suggestions regarding your specific pooch's needs.

Once you have determined the best new "den" for your pooch, you can begin the introductions:

- **Introduction to the crate.** Let your new pooch walk around in the crate and explore. You can encourage new crate exploration by tossing a treat or favorite toy in the crate. Praise your pooch when he/she enters the crate. It's supposed to be a safe haven, remember?

Once your new family member repeatedly enters the crate with the door open shut the door for a few minutes. Put a treat in the crate and quietly shut the door. After a short time period of time let your pooch out of the crate with more praise and a treat.

- **Spending time in the crate.** Eventually your new family member will be able to stay calmly in the crate while you leave the room. Place a safe chew toy or even a bowl of food if its meal time into the crate. Shut the door quietly and leave the room. After a short period of time check on your pooch. Once your new family member is done with the chew toy or bowl of food let him or her out—especially if a meal was consumed.
- **Feeding in the crate.** The crate is also a great place to routinely feed your new pup especially if other dogs are in the area. Your new pup will need a potty break after eating. Praise your new family member and congratulate yourself for such good work!
- **Gradually build up time.** Build up the amount of time your pooch can handle staying in the crate gradually over days or weeks. Don't use the crate as a "warehouse" for your dog. Even the best pup or dog with the best training might have an accident in the crate. Don't punish your new family member if that happens. Go back to the basics and make sure your pooch gets an opportunity to go out for a potty break before being left in their den for extended lengths of time.
- **Crate training takes time and patience.** Some dogs and puppies can be crate trained in one day. Some will take several days and a few might take weeks or more. If your new family member fusses or whines in the crate wait a few moments. If they quiet down praise him or her. Try not to get in the habit of letting your pooch out of the crate immediately if he or she whines. They will quickly learn that if they whine or fuss they'll get out of the crate which will only un-do your hard work.

This sheet is intended for general informational purposes only and is not, and should not be considered by you as a substitute for professional training and/or medical advice. If your animal appears sick or is exhibiting unusual or aggressive behavior, please seek medical attention immediately or contact a professional trainer in your area.

- **Other uses for the crate.** When you aren't actively crate training leave the crate door open. Toss treats and favorite toys inside the crate when your pooch isn't looking so that your doggy will learn to discover surprises and treats in the crate and find it even more of an appealing place to be. The crate should be near the family so that your new pooch feels like a part of your "pack". Isolating your pooch in the crate will make training harder and can be very stressful for your new family member. Dogs are very social and love to be near their families.

Special Note: Dogs with separation anxiety don't do well in crates and will require special help. Talk to your veterinarian or trainer about special needs your new family member may have.