

CRATE TRAINING

Dr. Don McKeown, Dr. Andrew Luescher, and Dr. Mary Machum - Copyright

Although many people do not like the idea of crate training, most dogs look on their crate as a den which provides privacy, comfort and security. Crate training can be extremely useful in a variety of circumstances:

- it prevents vocalization at night because the crate can be placed in your bedroom
- it prevents investigative activity (chewing or destructive behavior)
- it is the best method for house-training
- a crate trained dog will travel calmly and will not need to be tranquilized
- crate trained dogs are happier when boarded (if their crate goes with them)

The only disadvantage of crate training is that it cannot be used if the pup is isolated for long periods. The dog should never be left in the cage for more than 4 hours during the day, although it is fine to leave him in it all night.

STEPS IN CRATE TRAINING

1. The crate, for a puppy, should be large enough for the adult dog to stand up and turn around in. One should reduce the crate size for puppies during house training.
2. The crate should be kept in the kitchen or bedroom. You may wish to keep it in the kitchen for the day and move it to your bedroom at night. It should not be left in an isolated area.
3. To start with, put treats, meals, water and toys in the crate so the pup can go into it on its own. Try to associate the crate with pleasant experiences. **DO NOT USE THE CRATE AS PUNISHMENT.**
4. Put the pup in the crate for a few minutes with the door closed. If the pup misbehaves, discipline it with a loud noise. Try for 10 minutes (if the pup is quiet), then let him out. After one hour, try again for 30 minutes. If the pup is happy for this length of time, he is conditioned to be left alone. Never let the pup out of the cage, or pay attention to it, if it is barking, whining, howling, or doing anything you don't want. Make a loud noise, and if he is quiet for 5 seconds, let him out. This makes him learn that he cannot get out by making a fuss, and that you reward quiet behavior with attention.
5. You may want to put a blanket over a wire cage to make it seem more like a den. Give the pup a chew toy, but something to lie on is optional.
6. Do not put food, water, or a chew toy in the crate while house-training the pup.