



Crate Training & House Breaking 101

Crate training is simply the fastest and most effective way to housebreak your puppy. With a little patience, attention, and common sense, you can successfully house break your dog in a very short time while simultaneously teaching your dog habits and behaviors that will prove helpful in a variety of situations. Once your dog is comfortable with your new crate, it can become an incredibly valuable tool in your housebreaking process.

Before domestication, dogs would seek shelter and security in caves. Dogs are “den” animals, and crates tap into these primal instincts that are still very much present in modern day dogs. During house breaking, crates are extremely useful, as dogs will instinctually avoid soiling their “home” and sleeping place. Furthermore, as your crate training progresses, your puppy will see the crate as his own safe haven and a place to escape from the hectic pace of human life.

Crate training provides the following added benefits:

- Crates provide protection and keep your dog away from potentially dangerous household items like food, poisons, electrical wires, etc.
- Crates can help reduce separation anxiety and prevent destructive behavior by providing a safe, secure place for your dog to stay while you are gone.
- Crates can serve as an indoor dog house than can be moved around whenever necessary or when entertaining guests.
- When traveling, crates provide a safe way to transport your dog by car or plane, and your dog will be ready to adapt to a boarding kennel or other crates if necessary.
- Knowing that your dog is in a safe place, protected from harm and away from valuables, provides precious peace of mind while you are away from home.

Introducing the Crate

When introducing your dog to the crate, the goal is simple – to ensure your dog develops a positive association with the crate. Once your dog understands the purpose of the crate and enjoys spending time in it, the rest of the process is simple and straightforward.

A crate should be nice and cozy. Don’t pick too large of a crate at first, as your dog may find it scary if it is too big. More importantly, if your dog does have an “accident” in the crate, a crate that is too large will allow your dog to avoid it by simply moving to the other side. An excessively large crate fails to take advantage of your dog’s natural instinct to keep its sleeping area clean, and will leave you frustrated when your puppy seems to have no problem soiling his crate.

Make the crate as appealing as possible by placing toys and treats inside. Treats, toys, and praise are your tools to create positive associations with the crate. Don’t force your puppy to enter the crate or push him inside; instead, spend lots of time playing with your dog and using treats in and around the crate. Putting something with your own scent in the crate – an

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old sweatshirt or blanket – can also help provide comfort to your pup. Each puppy is different and will become comfortable with the crate at his own pace. When your dog willingly enters the crate, praise your dog profusely. Choose a phrase such as “go crate” or “kennel” and use it consistently whenever your dog enters the crate.

Feeding your dog his meals inside the crate can also help. If your dog is refusing to go into the crate, one trick is to put his dinner inside the crate and then close the door. Wait a couple of minutes, and then let your dog have access. The anticipation of the food will help convince your puppy to enter the crate without hesitation.

As your puppy gets more comfortable, you can begin to close the door with your puppy inside for short periods. At first, remain near the crate so that your puppy doesn't become frightened. Gradually, you can begin to leave your puppy alone in the crate, only for a few minutes at a time at first. Once your dog is fully acclimated to the crate, you can begin to crate your dog for longer periods of time.

House Breaking

Successful house breaking requires vigilance and close observation of your puppy, but a crate can greatly simplify and facilitate the process. The primary rule of house breaking is that you should take your puppy out to go potty right after he wakes up from a nap, as well as right after he has eaten a meal. Keep in mind that puppies often have to go potty six or more times a day.

Keep your puppy in the crate for short periods throughout the day, and take your puppy outside to go potty as soon as you release it from the crate. Soon, you will have a sense of your puppy's schedule, and this will help you to plan your crating periods accordingly. If your puppy falls asleep, you can carefully place your puppy in the crate while he naps, and then take him out to go potty once he wakes. During the initial housebreaking period, observe your dog closely whenever he is not in the crate. Puppies can do their business in only a few seconds, but it is possible to learn their signs and common behaviors when they need go – sniffing, pacing, circling, etc. Crating and close observation will enable you to make sure that your puppy goes potty outside almost all the time, and your puppy will learn very quickly that this is the correct behavior.

When outside, make sure that you consistently use a phrase to let your dog know the behavior you want, such as “go potty.” When your dog has finished, praise the dog with “good potty,” treats, etc. This makes it clear what you are praising your dog for, and your puppy will pick up on this very quickly.

Now that your puppy is comfortable with the crate, you should begin to crate him during the nighttime as well. During the early stages of crate training, it can be helpful to keep the crate in your bedroom so you can hear in case your puppy starts whining and needs to go out. During the first few days or weeks, your puppy will likely need to go out in the middle of the night once in a while. By keeping your puppy in his crate, you can make sure you have adequate warning and prevent unnecessary accidents. In addition, your puppy should not have any water too late in the evening. 9pm or so is a good cut-off, after you have taken your puppy out for the last time.

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Barking/whining can mean your puppy needs to go potty, but it can also mean that he is just trying to convince you to let him out of the crate. Pay attention to when your puppy last went potty and keep a consistent schedule. If your dog learns that whining will let him have its way or will result in treats and rewards, he has no incentive to keep quiet and will drive you crazy in the process. Every puppy may whine or cry for a little while when first getting used to the crate, especially overnight. However, your dog will get accustomed to the crate quickly and your crate will eventually become a place for your dog to relax and feel safe. Trust in the fact that crates are consistent with your dog's natural and ancient instincts. Covering the crate with a cover or blanket can help stop barking and whining in some cases as well.

If your puppy has an accident in the crate, it is OK – accidents are inevitable. It will be an unpleasant experience for your puppy, and it will help reinforce that your puppy should only relieve itself when outside the crate and at your command. However, if your puppy does have an accident in the crate, make sure you clean it up very thoroughly. Use an odor-neutralizing cleaner from a pet store if possible – enzyme cleaners work best. Dogs associate potty locations with smell, so you want to make sure that your dog does not develop this association with your crate. Feeding your dog in the crate as suggested earlier can also help you remove this association.

As your puppy grows and matures, you can simply leave the door open so that the puppy can enter and leave as it wishes. You will find that the puppy will often escape to the crate to relax and get some much needed rest and relaxation. Eventually, you can leave the dog in the crate while you are away from the house for longer periods of time. When leaving or returning home, keep it low-key to make sure your dog doesn't get too anxious about your arrival or departure, and take your dog out to go potty immediately. Nevertheless, keep in mind that a crate does not give you a license to leave dog in crate for twenty hours per day. Dogs must be exercised and walked sufficiently for crate training to be effective.

Every dog and every owner is different, and each owner will need to make minor adjustments and tweaks during the crate training process to make sure that both the owner and puppy are comfortable with the process. It may take your dog only a few days, or a few weeks. But by using a crate as the foundation of your training, you are housebreaking your dog in the fastest and most effective way, and training your dog for any future situations where crating or transport may be required.