

Crate Training



Crate training your dog is a safe and humane way to confine your pet and eliminate unwanted behaviors while you are unable to supervise your pet. Properly crate training your pet will assist you with housetraining, help alleviate anxiety by providing a safe place and help eliminate barking issues. A dog that is crate trained early will also be much more relaxed and calm if it is required to travel later in life.

When determining if your dog will be confined to a crate or a room in your home, it is important to determine the length of time that you will be absent. If you will be gone for a sufficient length of time and the animal may need to eliminate during that time, then it is advised to confine your pet to a puppy-proofed room in your home with an appropriate place to defecate. If you will only be gone a short amount of time, then it is recommended to confine the animal to a crate. If properly trained, your pet will soon view his crate as a safe haven. This safe haven is not considered a place to eliminate and keeping your pet confined in a crate long enough to force it to eliminate should be strongly avoided.

When choosing a crate to purchase, consider the size of your pet, its personality, and your travel plans in the future. Your crate should be large enough for your pet to stand up, turn around and lay down comfortably. It should contain a place for fresh water and food and adequate ventilation. If your pet is sociable and likes to view the world around them, then a wire mesh crate would allow this flexibility. However, if travel plans are in your family's future, then perhaps a sturdy, airline approved plastic crate would be a better option.

The first step to crate training your puppy is to teach your pet that the crate is a safe haven for him. In order to do this, you should avoid using the crate as a form of punishment and instead associate it with calm, relaxing and enjoyable experiences. However, it is good to keep in mind, that while not a punishment, the crate can be a useful tool to eliminating certain destructive behaviors.

Begin by allowing your pet to explore the crate on its own. Make the crate a warm and inviting environment by placing your pet's favorite bed inside and placing tasty treats or new toys inside. After a day of sufficient exploration and the pup is willing to enter and exit the crate on its own, take the dog outside to eliminate and exercise.

Upon returning indoors, place the puppy in the crate with food, water and some novel toys. Then close the door and leave the room. Remain close enough to hear the puppy but out of view. If the pup is tired after its recent exercise, then it may nap briefly in the crate.

Some vocalization and escape exploration is normal when your pet is first confined to his crate. Wait for a few minutes and until the pup has stopped vocalizing before releasing him. Never release the puppy when he is barking or crying as this reinforces the behavior and links barking with being released from the crate. If your pup will not stop barking, then some remote behavior modification may be necessary to startle the animal and make it stop. A squirt bottle or shaker can be used for this startle response.

When you release your pet from the crate, do not get excited or offer too much praise. Being released from the crate should not be treated as a treat or thing of excitement, rather going in the crate should be praised and rewarded. Practice leaving your pet in the crate for short periods many times throughout the next few days. At bedtime, your pet should also be placed in the crate after eliminating and exercising.

As the pup becomes more comfortable in its new crate, gradually increase the time the animal is kept confined. Remember to keep in mind how long your pet can hold its bladder and never leave it confined in a crate for longer than this time. As your pet grows older and the time spent in its new crate is increased, hopefully he will view the enclosure as a safe haven and a place to find new and fun treats and toys.