



CRATE TRAINING

Crate Training 101

When used correctly, a dog crate is an exceptional training and management tool. It is extremely useful for house-training, alone-time, settling, preventing destructive behavior, and travel. A crate can become a favorite place for your pup or newly adopted dog if you introduce it right and keep it as a special safe haven. Use chew toys, praise, and treats to *"Make The Crate Great."*

Crates come in many shapes, sizes, and materials. Plastic crates are very durable. Wire crates with trays are well ventilated and easy to clean. Nylon crates are foldable and portable. For housetraining purposes you want a crate that is quite snug to discourage your pup from eliminating in it. If you don't want to purchase multiple crates, you can buy a larger crate and section off part of it while your pup is little. Then "remodel" it as your dog grows. Don't use bedding in the crate until your pup is totally housetrained. Most dog beds, mats, and pads will trigger crate soiling which is counter-productive.

Are Crates Humane?

New dog owners often worry that crates are cruel or inhumane. The crate itself is not the problem; it's the irresponsible way they get used to confine dogs for endless hours without a break. This makes the crate a prison, not a sanctuary; and some dogs have very bad memories about their time in jail.

If your dog has had negative experiences with crating, or has learned to howl and whine in the crate, you'll need to rely on a basic Confinement Area as your primary housetraining and management tool, not a crate. (See our handouts on *Housetraining* and *Management* for guidance). It is possible to reintroduce a crate, but we recommend you only attempt this with help from a professional trainer.

Get Your Pup Used To The Crate:

1. Begin crate training right away, preferably the first day your puppy is in your home. Randomly throw small tasty treats into the EMPTY crate. Praise your puppy when he goes in to collect.
2. Put a treat in the crate when your pup is not looking. Leave the door open so your pup can wander in and find it. Replenish each time while the pup is not looking. Repeat often until you find your pup walking into the crate on his own searching for treats. T
3. When your puppy is comfortable going into the crate on his own looking for treats, start signaling him into the crate with a phrase like "Crate Time", then reward. Then close the door for 1-2 seconds and treat him through the door. Let him back out. Repeat this step many times, gradually building up the time to 10 seconds of the door being closed.
4. Stuff a Kong with something very yummy or use a special chewie. Signal your pup into the crate, then put the goodies in. Shut the door. Move about the house normally. Let your puppy back out after 5 minutes or when he finishes his treat. Don't make a fuss over him. Repeat this several times, varying the length of your indoor absences from 5 to 20 minutes.
5. Next, leave your puppy in the crate with something delicious while you leave the house for very short 5 to 10 minute errands, like getting the mail or watering the garden. Gradually build the length of your absences in 10-15 minute increments.



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When Do I Use The Crate?

Initially, use the crate only for very short absences and use it only if you are certain that your pup or adult dog is "empty", meaning you witnessed her doing some kind of elimination in the past 10-15 minutes. These are general guidelines for pups who practice being crated regularly:

- 8-10 weeks up to 1 hour
- 11-12 weeks up to 2 hours
- 13-16 weeks up to 3 hours
- Over 4 months up to 4 hours

What Do I Do at Night?

Many pup-dogs are content to sleep in their crates overnight and can build up some real duration because they are less active at night. However, young puppies often need potty breaks during the night for a few weeks. If you're able to wake up for midnight outings, this does speed up the housetraining process. But if you really need your sleep, use a *Confinement Area* (see *Housetraining* handout for details) for overnight stays and plan your morning so you can handle the extra clean up. Also, pull up your pup's water bowl at night to help create an emptier bladder.

When you put your puppy in his confinement area for the night he may try a little whining or crying to get out or to get your attention. This is very common the first several nights in a new home. It helps if you do one last potty break, then put your pup to bed with a Kong or chewie while you settle down nearby. Once he's settled, leave him quietly and put yourself to bed. However, if whining and crying continue non-stop at night, temporarily rearrange sleeping quarters so your pup can sleep nearer to you. This reduces stress and creates normal sleep patterns. When you are further along in potty training, you can gradually migrate the sleeping areas back to normal.

When Can I Give My Pup Free Run of the House?

Uh, how about never? Just kidding! Seriously, you must wait until your pup is both chew trained and house-trained for periods up to several hours in order to leave the dog unsupervised in the house for an extended time. It takes *months* to build up this kind of reliability; but if you're diligent and careful, your pup will be ready sooner than later.

When you think your pup is truly ready for some test runs out of the crate, make sure he has some serious exercise and a potty outing first. Then confine him to one full room for 1 hour with a chew toy. Choose a tiled room, like the kitchen or the bathroom, so accidents can be easily cleaned. Dog-proof the room as needed by putting tempting items totally out of reach. Build up to a few hours in one room, then add a room each week your pup is both accident-free and destruction-free. Supervise each time you introduce him to a new room. If your pup has a mishap, figure out what went wrong and take away that room for a week while you do easier test runs before trying the new room again.

Need More Help?

The initial stages of teaching a pup or newly adopted dog to accept a crate can be tricky and messy. Let us help problem-solve your situation so your dog learns to enjoy confinement and develops reliable habits. Contact us for a private training session or a consult via the BravoPup Hotline.