



House-Safety:

Confinement and Crate Training

Why do dogs need to be confined?

For most families, dogs must learn to spend a portion of the day at home while their family is away at school, work, or recreational activities. During those times when you are away or unavailable to supervise, the pet may feel the need to dig, chew, play, explore, eat, or eliminate.

How can this misbehavior be prevented?

Preventing such inappropriate behaviors when you are absent involves both scheduling and confinement. Scheduling means insuring that the pet has had the opportunity to play, eat, and eliminate before you leave them. Prevention involves keeping the pet in a confined area (such as a crate) where it is secure, safe, and can do no damage to itself or your possessions.

What type of crate or confinement area works best?

It may be possible to dog-proof the house by closing a few doors or putting up child gates or barricades. The dog can then be allowed access to the remaining areas of the house. If this dog proofing is not possible, confine the dog to a single room, pen, or crate. A metal, collapsible crate with a tray floor works well, as long as the crate is large enough for the dog to stand, turn, and stretch out. Some dogs feel more secure if a blanket is draped over the crate. A plastic traveling crate or playpens can also be used as long as they are indestructible and escape proof.

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Where should the crate be located?

Because dogs are social animals, an ideal location for the crate is a room where the family spends time such as a kitchen, den, or bedroom rather than an isolated laundry or furnace room.

Isn't crate training cruel?

Crate training is neither cruel nor unfair. On the contrary, leaving the dog unsupervised to wander, investigate, destroy, and perhaps injure itself is far more inhumane than confinement.

What are the benefits of crate training?

The most important benefits are the safety it affords the pet and the damage that is prevented. The crate also provides a place of comfort and security where the dog can relax, sleep, or chew on a favorite toy. By confining the pet to a crate or room when the owner is not available to supervise, behavior problems can be immediately prevented. When you are at home, supervision and rewards can be used to prevent undesirable behavior and to teach proper ones.





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Will cage confinement help with house-training?

Yes. Crate training is one of the quickest and most effective ways to house-train a dog. Since most dogs instinctively avoid eliminating in their sleeping and eating areas, dogs that use their crate as a bed or “den” will seldom eliminate inside unless they have been left in the crate for too long. Crate training can also help teach the dog to develop control over its elimination. As soon as your dog is released from its crate, take it to the designated area and reward elimination at acceptable locations. Since the crate prevents chewing, digging, and elimination on the owner’s home and property, owners of crate trained puppies have fewer behavior concerns, the puppy receives far less discipline and punishment, and the good behavior is rewarded.

Will the crate provoke barking?

No. The crate can be a useful way to reduce or eliminate distress barking. Rather than locking the puppy up and away from the owners at nighttime or during mealtime, the puppy can be housed in its crate in the bedroom or kitchen when the owners are present. This way the puppy cannot get into mischief and is less likely to cry out or vocalize. If the puppy is locked away in a laundry room or basement with no access to the owners, distress vocalization is far more likely. If the owner then goes to the puppy to quiet it down or check it out, the crying behavior is rewarded and the puppy will continue to cry out.

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What about caging and travel?

Of course throughout its life, whether traveling or boarding, the dog may require crate confinement. Dogs that are familiar and comfortable with caging are more likely to feel secure and far less stressed, should caging be required.

How can crating or confinement become a positive experience?

The key to making a crate the dog's favorite retreat and sleeping area is to associate the crate with as many positive and relaxing experiences and stimuli as possible (food, treats, chew toys, bedding) and to place the dog in its cage only at scheduled rest and sleep periods. You must therefore be aware of the dog's schedule, including its needs for exploration, play, food, and elimination, so that the dog is only placed in its cage after each of these needs are fulfilled. You must then return to the dog to release it from its cage when it is time for these needs to be met again. A radio or television playing in the background may help to calm the dog when it is alone in its cage, especially during the daytime. These may also help to mask environmental noises that can stimulate the dog to vocalize. The crate should **never** be used as punishment.



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How do I crate-train my new puppy?

01

Introduce the puppy to the crate as soon as it is brought home and as early in the day as possible. Place a variety of treats in the cage throughout the day so the puppy is encouraged to enter voluntarily. Food, water, toys and bedding could also be offered.

02

Choose a location outdoors for the puppy to eliminate. Take the puppy to the location and reward the puppy lavishly with praise or food once it eliminates. After additional play and exercise, place the pup in a crate with water, toys and a treat and close the door.

03

If the puppy is tired and calm, it may take a “nap” shortly after being placed in its crate. Leave the room but remain close enough to hear the puppy. Escape behavior and vocalization are to be expected when a dog is first placed into a crate. If the “complaints” are short or mild, ignore the dog until the crying stops. Never release the puppy unless it is quiet. This teaches that quiet behavior – not crying, will be rewarded. Release the puppy after a few minutes of quiet or a short nap.

04

Punishment may be useful to deter crying if it does not subside on its own. A sealed can filled with coins can be shaken when the pup barks. Other methods include hair dryers or alarms (audible or ultrasonic). Plug in an alarm near the crate and turn it on with a remote control switch each time the dog barks. The owner should remain out of sight. This way the dog can be taught that barking leads to punishment whether the owner is present or not. When the barking ceases, the punishment stops. Bark collars that are activated by barking are also available for persistent problems. Punishment must always be used with caution, since it can exacerbate the vocalization problems of anxious pets.

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05

Repeat the cage and release procedure a few more times during the day before bedtime. Each time, increase the time the dog must stay in the crate before letting it out.

06

At bedtime the dog should be placed in its crate and left for the night after exercise and elimination. If the pup sleeps in one end of its crate and eliminates in the other, a divider can be installed to keep the puppy in a smaller area.

07

Never leave the puppy in a crate for longer than it can control its bladder or the pup may be forced to eliminate in the crate. If the pup must be left for long periods of time, it should be confined to a larger area such as a dog-proof room or pen, with paper left down for elimination. As the puppy gets older, it will be able to control itself for longer periods of time.

Play and Exercise in Dogs

Why are play and exercise important?

Play with people and other dogs provides the dog with some of its exercise requirements and helps to meet social needs. Insufficient exercise can contribute to problem behaviors including destructiveness (chewing and digging), investigative behavior (garbage raiding), hyperactivity, unruliness, excitability, attention-getting behaviors and even some barking.

What are good ways to play with and exercise my puppy?

Walking your dog is a good way to accomplish exercise and can be enjoyable and healthy for you as well. From an early age you should acclimate your puppy to a collar and leash. Keep your puppy away from stray dogs and neighborhood parks until all puppy vaccinations are finished. Training sessions are also an excellent way to gain owner leadership and control, while providing interactions between you and your pet.

How much exercise and play is appropriate?

Selecting an appropriate amount and type of exercise depends on the dog. Dog breeds that are bred for their stamina or to do “work” often have higher exercise requirements. For purebred dogs, consider their traditional work when deciding the type and amount of play to provide. The length and type of play and exercise for your dog will also depend on its behavioral requirements and health limitations. While some dogs may still be ready for more after a five-mile jog and a game of fetch, others may be tired and satisfied after a short walk around the block.



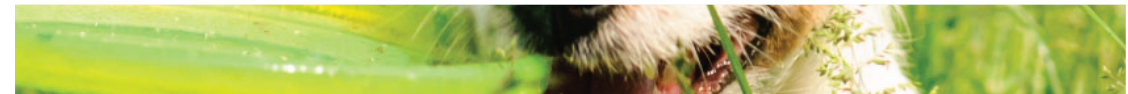
Play and Exercise in Dogs

How can I keep my dog occupied when I am away?

When you are out or busy at home with other activities, it would be ideal for your dog to be relaxed and sleeping, but this will not always be the case. Exploring the environment, stealing food items, raiding trashcans, chewing or digging are a few activities dogs will find to keep themselves occupied. Therefore, when you are certain you have provided your dog with sufficient exercise and you must leave your dog alone, provide toys and distractions to keep your dog occupied and confine your pet to a safe, dog-proofed area. Some dogs do best when housed with another dog for play and companionship. Others prefer objects to chew, areas to dig, self-feeding toys, or even a video to keep themselves occupied while you are unavailable.

What type of play should be avoided?

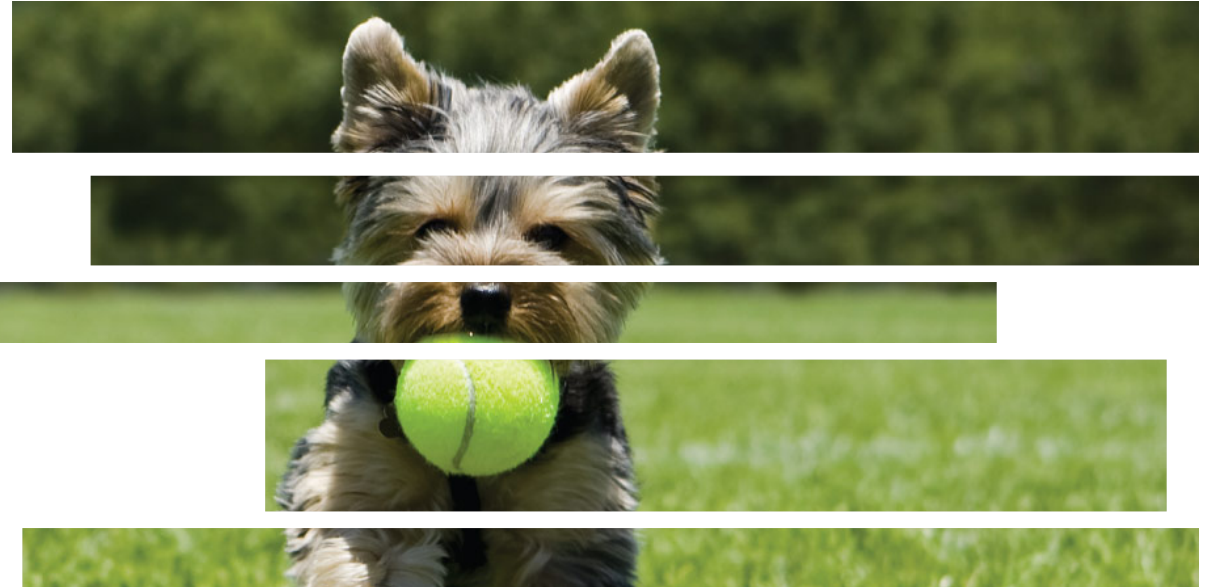
Try to avoid games that pit your puppy's strength against your strength. Tug-of-war helps to direct chewing toward an acceptable play object rather than an owner's hands or clothing. However, some puppies get overstimulated and become far too aggressive during these games. Teaching the dog to "leave it" on command can help ensure you remain in control of object play sessions. Games like chase are good exercise, but they can often result in wild exuberant play that gets out of control. A general rule of thumb for these games is to avoid them, unless you initiate the game and are capable of stopping it immediately should it get out of control.



Play and Exercise in Dogs

How can I teach my puppy to play fetch?

You will need to train your puppy to do three things: get the toy, bring it back, and give it to you so you can throw it again. First, make the toy enticing (squeaky toy or ball). Toss the toy 1-2 feet and encourage your puppy to go to it. When your puppy gets there, praise them. If they pick it up in their mouth, tell them “good dog.” Then, move backwards a short way, clap your hands and entice your puppy to come towards you using a happy tone of voice. When your puppy returns to you, say “give it” and show another toy or a small food treat. Most puppies will gladly give the toy to get the new toy or treat and at the same time will quickly learn the “give it” command. Then, by repeating these steps, the game of fetch itself should soon be enough of a reward that food and toys will no longer be necessary to entice the puppy to give the toy.





Rewards:

Learning and Reinforcement

The best way to train your pet is through the proper use of positive reinforcement, rewards and punishment. You need to understand which to use and when, how to use them and what will happen if they are improperly used. With training you want your pet to “learn” the proper task and/or behavior.

How does learning take place?

Learning occurs by establishing the relationship (either positive or negative) between behavior and consequences. There can be different possible outcomes of behavior.

When there is a positive relationship between behavior and consequences, the more your pet performs a certain behavior, the more of the consequence it receives. If there is a negative relationship between behavior and outcome, the more of the behavior the pet does, the less of the consequence it receives. When we increase a behavior by removing a stimulus this is known as negative reinforcement. For example, when a dog barks at an intruder (such as the postman), the barking has been reinforced because the stimulus (the postman) was removed.

What is positive reinforcement?

Positive reinforcement is anything that increases the likelihood a behavior will be repeated. There is a positive relationship between behavior and consequence. The more the pet does a behavior, the more consequence it gets and what it gets is good. This makes that behavior increase.