



Crate training

A common scenario when I do home visits is failed use of a crate. A crate can be a brilliant training aid or long-term item of equipment.

Below I refer to dog, but the same applies whatever age of the dog.

Once trained, it is fine to leave your dog in a crate overnight for sleeping and for short periods when left alone. Ensure your dog has access to water. Your dog's collar should be removed when left unsupervised in a crate.

No dog or puppy should be left alone for long periods & certainly not in a crate.

A crate should be 6 inches (15cm) longer & taller than your dog, so when buying a crate for a puppy you need to allow for his growth. Your dog needs to be able to stand up, stretch and turn around comfortably.

A young dog will also need enough space for you to set up a 'toilet' area in the crate for him. If you are not following a night-time toilet training exercise.

Your dog needs to recognise the crate as a great place to be his 'safe haven' when he wants to rest or sleep. Children should be taught not to disturb the puppy when he is in it.

Put the crate in the place where your dog usually sleeps and place his bed inside. Encourage him to wander in by throwing treats inside the crate. Put your dog's food in the crate when you feed him. Use a kong, stuffed with goodies, so he only gets this in his crate. Sit on the floor by the crate and play with your dog, make a fuss of him while he is in there.

All of this is to help your puppy build a positive association with the crate.

First, with the crate closed. Drop some tasty treats in the crate and let your dog try to get in to the crate to retrieve the treats. When he is really excited at trying to retrieve the treats. Open the door and let him go in to the crate to enjoy them. Repeat the exercise a few times and your dog is already enjoying the crate.

Once your puppy starts to wander into the crate quite freely, to rest or sleep, then you can start closing the door BUT for brief periods only. One common mistake that people make is to only close the door when they leave the dog alone. Your dog will start to associate the closed door with you leaving him and will cause him distress whenever the door is closed.

When you start closing the door, sit on the floor by the crate and stroke your dog through the bars. Just leave the door closed in short intervals to start with whilst also remaining in sight. Build this up slowly. You could also get your dog used to being in the crate during your meal times or when visitors first arrive. Give him a kong or something to do when you use the crate at times like this.



Once your dog is settled in the crate with the door closed, then you can start to go into another room for a few minutes, building this up until you feel your dog is ready to be left inside the crate whilst you leave your home.

If you take time with your crate training, you will find you have an extremely valuable piece of equipment not just for training but also for safety and peace of mind.

Happy training