



CRATES

by Pat Scott

I wouldn't dream of raising a puppy without using a crate. Crates are a great tool to use when you can't actively supervise your pup. And you know how much trouble puppies and young dogs can get into when they are not supervised!

A crate will also make the job of housebreaking much easier.

The problem with dog crates is convincing people that crating a dog is not cruel and unusual punishment! The dog is not in "jail". **Dogs that are crate-trained actually like their crates. Dogs are den animals. A crate can be your dog's "den" - a safe haven where he can relax and feel secure, a room of his own.** Ever wished you could just go to your room for peace and quiet? Well your dog may feel the same way at times.

A puppy should not be confined continuously (except at night), but a crate can be a big help for an hour or two at a time. As the pup grows older, he can spend longer periods of time in a crate as long as it isn't a regular long-term arrangement.

The only problems arise if the pup is forced into the crate suddenly and becomes frightened, or if he is left in it for hours at a time and becomes lonely and bored.

Crates can be very useful for dogs of any age. At some time in your dog's life, he may need to stay at the veterinarian's, where he will be confined in a crate. If he has been crate-trained ahead of time, he will feel safe and secure instead of overly stressed. A dog that can relax and rest in a crate may even have a faster recovery rate.

A crate is also excellent for car travel. It keeps the dog safe from sudden stops and swerves, and keeps the people safe from an excitable dog.

Types and Sizes:

There are two types of dog crates -

1. The fibreglass "airline" kennel, and the folding wire crate. The choice is yours. Some dogs prefer more privacy - you can drape a towel or blanket over a wire crate if desired. Wire crates are generally more expensive but you have the advantage of folding them up if necessary.

2. Wire Crate. The crate should be large enough so that the dog can stand up, turn around, and lie down. If using the crate to housebreak a puppy, it is important that the crate not be too large. **Buy a crate that will accommodate your pet when it is fully grown.** (Approximately 42"L x 28"W x 31"H)

You can get a piece of pegboard that will fit the inside of the crate. Using plastic 'wire ties', secure the pegboard as a divider inside the crate, giving only enough room for the puppy to lay down inside. As the puppy grows, provide more room by moving the divider. When the puppy does not soil in its crate, remove the divider so the puppy can have use of the full crate.

Getting your dog used to the crate:

When getting the dog used to the crate, keep it near the centre of activity so the dog won't feel isolated. A corner of the kitchen or the family room is good. At night you can move the crate to your bedroom so the dog can be with you.

Set the crate up and let the dog investigate it. Show it to him while talking in a happy voice. Have some yummy treats on hand. Put a treat just inside the crate and let the dog get it. Then throw a treat farther inside the crate, until the dog is willingly going all the way inside the crate. Leave the door open during this phase. When the dog is comfortable going into the crate, shut the door with the dog inside. Scratch him through the side of the crate, tell him how wonderful he is, give more treats and let him out. Repeat this step several times. The next step is to leave the room for only a few seconds, then return and let him out. Gradually build up the time you are away. After the dog is crate-trained, he will be content in the crate for several hours at a time, if he is properly exercised beforehand.

Always praise the dog for going into the crate, and during the training process give him a treat every time you put him into the crate. Use a word or phrase, like "go to bed". or "kennel".

Use the crate wisely. Don't crate only when you are leaving the house, or he may associate the crate with being left alone. Place the dog in the crate while you are home, too. By crating when you are home and when you leave, the dog becomes comfortable in it and not anxious that you are leaving him/her alone. This helps to reduce separation anxiety later in life.

Never let the dog out of the crate while he is barking or whining. This would reward him for barking, and he will be training you to let him out when he wants. Try ignoring the dog while he is barking, and let him out after he has been quiet for a few seconds. If the barking persists, you will need to use a correction. Tap the top of the crate, making a loud noise, as you say "Quiet". Praise as soon as he is quiet, and give a treat. Give random treats while the dog is quiet. Be proactive, not just reactive when he barks or whines.

I like to give a stuffed Kong, bully stick, or other safe chewy when I crate a dog.

Feeding the dog in the crate is one way to speed the acceptance of the crate.

When your dog is not confined in the crate, leave the door open so he can go in if he wants. Never permit children to crawl into the dog's crate. This is his own space and should be a place where he can go for peace and quiet when children get overbearing or when he just wants to be alone.

A crate is a wonderful tool for the prevention of problems.

It can keep your dog safe, happy, and non-destructive.

Crate Training Guide

(Courtesy of Precision Pet Products)

Why do Dogs Love Crates?

Dogs are, by nature, den animals and feel secure in small, enclosed spaces. Most dogs will seek out a place in your home that will mimic a den. You will often find them sleeping under a table or desk. Dog crates make excellent dens and can serve as a refuge, a hangout and a bedroom. It is very important that the dog crate is never used as punishment - the crate must always be regarded as a safe and special retreat.

The most common misconception about a dog crate is that it is a cruel form of caging a pet. This is completely false, and in fact, a dog will actually find a crate to be a secure and safe sanctuary in the same manner as a wolf enjoys the comfort of a den for resting and eating.

Why do Dog Owners Love Crates?

Next to the training collar and leash, the dog crate is the proven training tool most recommended by professional dog trainers, groomers and veterinarians. Once accustomed to the dog crate, unfavourable behaviours such as house soiling, destructive chewing, digging, unnecessary barking, and howling can be avoided. Crate training is also an ideal system to help ease separation anxiety. Since the dog habits will be much easier to regulate by using the dog crate, discipline for misbehaviour will be less necessary which will allow a stronger dog and owner relationship. Crate-trained dogs travel easier in their crate, as they feel secure. This sense of security is also helpful if a dog needs to stay at the veterinarian or groomer since the dog is already accustomed to being crated.

And, compared to the cost of replacing furniture, plants, carpet, and other personal items that may be destroyed when a dog is allowed to roam a household unsupervised, the expense of a crate is very economical.

How Can a Crate be Used to Avoid Accidents?

Crate training is proven to be the fastest, most cost effective method of instilling dog behaviour. A dog's natural instinct is to keep the area in which your dog rests as clean as possible. Most dogs are very resistant to being near their own waste and therefore will make an extra effort to control their own elimination when confined to a crate. By the owner encouraging elimination in the proper place immediately after a dog is released from the crate, the pet quickly learns when and where to care of business. This is a proven method of house training recommended by nationally known trainers.

How Can a Crate be Used to Solve Other Behavioral Problems?

Most behaviour problems such as destructive chewing are due to the boredom of an unsupervised dog. If allowed to continue the behaviour, it quickly becomes a habit that is difficult to change. Dogs naturally want to please their owners and receive praise and love in return. If the dog knows exactly what is expected of her, your dog will gladly behave accordingly to benefit from it and be rewarded. By using a crate during the owner short-term absences, the dog is simply not able to misbehave. Instead your dog will rest quietly in her crate. Dogs generally sleep 90% of the time the owners are away. It's the other 10% that so many things can go wrong. By crating the dog, you are essentially only asking for a small amount of change to the dog natural schedule.

How Can a Crate be Used to Ease Separation Anxiety?

Separation anxiety is the number one behavioural problem today. It can be defined as increased fearfulness of the dog after the departure of the owner. This often misunderstood disorder causes loving pet owners to feel they have no other option than to find their dog another home. Dogs are pack animals and are not prepared to cope with isolation. They must be taught how to be alone and reassured that they will not be alone for long. Through positive crate training, the dog personal den can provide an increased sense of security, which often helps ease stress and stress-related behaviours. Antidepressant medication may curve the behaviour but it will not solve the problem.

When Can You Start Using a Crate?

Immediately! The sooner the better, no matter what age your dog may be. Ideally, a puppy should be introduced to a crate at an early age. In fact, many reputable breeders will already have a puppy familiar with a crate before the puppy is introduced to a new home, which makes that transition much easier for both the dog and new owner. But a dog at any age can be introduced to crate training. Older dogs may view the crate as punishment in the beginning and may need extra encouragement and slower graduated confinement times. Start your training when you are able to be home with your dog.

Why a Wire Crate?

A wire crate is recommended to allow your dog optimum visibility of her surroundings. Your dog will be most relaxed if your dog is sheltered but still able to view her surroundings without having to get up. Your dog will rest longer and quieter. Wire crates are designed for proper ventilation. Illness can be caused during house breaking if puppies or dogs are forced to inhale urine odours. Complete ventilation will prevent this and many other ailments that can be caused from low ventilation. Wire crates are easy to move and store, and can be cleaned with soap and water. With proper care, a wire crate will last the life of the dog, therefore are more economical than plastic designs.

What Size of Crate Does Your Dog Need?

When selecting a crate for a puppy, go ahead and get one that will fit the dog need when your dog is fully-grown. Precision Pet Products Puppy Panels allow you to adjust the size of the crate and are available for larger crates while the puppy is growing. The dog should be able to comfortably walk in, turn around and lay down in the crate. Your pet should not feel cramped, but do not use a crate that is too big, that will defeat the purpose of giving the dog the sense of having his own enclosed space. An oversized crate will also defeat the dog natural instinct to keep her home clean and free of waste since your dog may use one end to rest and one end to

Where Should the Crate be Located?

The crate should be placed in an area that is easy to supervise. Since dogs are highly social animals the crate should be in an area of the household where the family spends most of their time. The crate should not be put in an isolated area. At night, the bedroom is an ideal place for a crate so that the dog can feel the security of being near her owner. Dog owners that are familiar with crate training and its benefits to both people and pets often have two or more crates set up in the house. (For example, one in the den and one in the bedroom.) Wherever the crate is placed, it is important that it not be in a draft or direct heat. Some dogs feel more secure when a towel or blanket is draped over the top and sides of the crate.

It is especially important to keep the crate in the bedroom at night while puppies are being housetrained. For successful housetraining, you must be able to hear your puppy cry when your dog needs to be let outside to eliminate. Each individual dog varies but as a rule a puppy can control elimination through the night as early as three months of age. It is also important to regulate a puppy feeding schedule so that this can be taken into consideration as to when and how often your dog must be allowed to relieve herself. The last meal of the day should come at least two hours before bedtime. It is important to establish a timely routine so that the dog body functions can adjust to when your dog will be released from the crate. As a dog gets older the amount of time your dog can stay in the crate can be extended but should never exceed more than six to eight hours.

Introducing Your Dog to Her Crate.

Important Note: Always take care to remove both collar and tags prior to your dog entering her crate.

Allow your dog to explore the crate on her own. You can toss some of her favourite toys or treats inside and show interest in the crate to encourage her curiosity. Leave the door open during the introduction period. **NEVER** force your dog into her crate and **ALWAYS** praise her anytime your dog enters on her own.

Soon your dog will enter and exit the crate willingly. At that time you should close the door for a few seconds or a minute and remain close to the crate praising her while your dog is inside. Then, let your dog out in a calm and quiet manor, not making a big deal of it. You do not want the exit of the crate to be an excitable moment. This will make your dog want out of her crate rather than enjoying the time inside.

If your dog barks or cries while inside her crate, reassure her and wait for her to settle down before allowing her out of the crate. You do not want her to associate negative behaviour with being released from the crate.

Gradually you can extend the amount of time the dog is left in a crate. Your first few absences should be less than 30 minutes. Keep your departures and arrivals low-key. Continue to crate your dog for a few minutes each day when you are home, so that crating does not always predict that you are leaving. Within a few attempts over two or three days most dogs will enter the crate willingly and quietly settle down for a nap. It is natural for your pet to bark or cry when getting used to her new den.

Some owners like to feed their dog in the crate, although the bowl should be removed as soon as the dog finishes eating so that it is not in her way. Sometimes this will help gain the dogs trust with a crate. Remember that puppies will need to eliminate immediately after a meal and adult dogs will need to eliminate within 30 minutes. Once the puppy or dog no longer has a habit of chewing, a washable blanket or some other form of bedding can be put in the bottom of the crate for additional comfort.

It is very important that the convenience of a crate not be abused. Every dog needs plenty of exercise and should be allowed the opportunity to socialize daily with her human family.

SUNDANEKA GERMAN SHEPHERDS



Quick Reference Guide

Start your training when you are able to be home with your dog. Always take care to remove chain collars prior to your dog entering her crate.

Allow your dog to **explore** the crate on his/her own. You can toss some of her favourite toys or treats inside and show interest in the crate to encourage her curiosity.

Leave the **door open** during the introduction period.

NEVER force your dog into her crate and

ALWAYS praise her anytime your dog enters on her own.

- 2** Once your dog enters and exits her crate willingly, **close the door** for a few seconds or a minute. Remain close to the crate **praising** her while your dog is inside. Then, let her out in a calm quiet manner - do not make a big deal out of it. Do not release your dog if it is barking or crying - wait until your dog is **settled down** to release her.

Gradually extend the amount of time your dog spends in the crate.

Your first few absences should be **less than 30 minutes**.

Keep your departures and arrivals low key. Continue to crate your dog for a few minutes each day when you are home so that crating **does not always predict** that you leaving. Encouraging your dog to eliminate in the proper place **immediately** after your dog is released from the crate will quickly teach her when and where to "take care of business".

- 4** Within a few attempts over two or three days, most dogs will enter the crate **willingly** and quietly **settle down** for a nap.

A crate should **NEVER** be overused or used as a form of punishment. A crate will be most useful to you and your dog if it is regarded as a special retreat area and not a punishment.