

# Puppy Crate Training - Step by Step Instruction

Puppy crate training is a fantastic method of **managing the safety and well-being of young puppies**. When used properly the crate is an invaluable tool for establishing good habits in your puppies and also for **preventing** problem behaviors before they arise.

In spite of what you may think or have read about *puppy crate training* the truth is that we **crate train our puppies for their benefit** - that's why we do it. Secondary to that is the fact that using a crate also benefits us and our furniture, shoes, carpet, cushions etc...

## Puppy Crate Training - Why Do We Do It?

Over time the crate will become your puppy's **own private area which they will grow to love and feel secure in**. You will come to rely on your crate just like I do in many day to day activities including:

- One of the first and most important uses of the crate is in the **puppy housebreaking process**. Crate training is the best way to quickly teach your puppy to eliminate (go to the toilet) outside.
- Crating our puppies teaches them to **chew on the toys we provide** to them and prevents them from chewing on the things we don't want them to chew on (shoes, furniture, curtains etc.). This is the **key to establishing good habits** in our dogs and preventing destructive habits which can be difficult to rectify.
- When your young puppy is in his/her crate he is safe from any number of **dangerous household items**. Unfortunately many puppies are severely injured and killed every year as a result of chewing wires, ingesting poisons or eating foreign objects.
- Separation anxiety is a huge problem for an increasingly large percentage of dogs. Proper use of the crate can help reduce the chance of your puppy developing separation anxiety. The crate becomes a place where your dog is **calm, out of trouble and accustomed to being alone**. I should add here that if you are away from home all day every day is a puppy really suitable for someone with your lifestyle anyway?

## Never Ever Use Your Crate As A Tool For Punishment!

- If you have friends or visitors of any kind coming and going from your home the crate is the **perfect place to keep your puppy safely confined** for a while.
- Because most crates are lightweight and portable you can move them from room to room so your puppy can be close by you all day long!
- Many crates are suitable for putting into your car which makes your puppy's traveling experience safer and often less stressful.
- When your puppy grows to love his crate it makes trips and stays at places such as your Vet and Dog Groomers a more bearable experience.
- When puppy crate training is applied correctly your puppy **cannot get into any mischief** which significantly reduces any need to discipline her. This makes for a far better environment in which to live (for both dog and owner).
- If you plan to do any activities like **competitive obedience training, fly-ball** or agility training you will find your crate is a great place to confine your dog in between training sessions and competition. Put it in a nice cool spot in the shade.

## Apart From The Dog What Else Goes In The Crate?

1. **Bedding** - choose a nice comfortable dog bed that can't be chewed up and swallowed by your feisty little pup. Be sure to choose bedding suited to your climate.
2. **Chew toys** - get a couple of good chew toys that you can stuff and even freeze. This keeps your puppy busy and teaches him what is appropriate to chew on. My dogs love Kongs and Buster Cubes.
3. **Water** - keep a nice supply of clean fresh water. Heavy wide based bowls that won't be tipped over are best or you can buy one that clips securely onto the crate wall.

## Introducing Your Puppy to the Crate

Your puppy's **first impression and experiences with the crate are all important.** We need to set it up so your puppy views the crate as a positive object right from the start. Your goal is for your puppy to love the crate and choose to use it himself rather than as a contraption he associates with isolation and loneliness.

Try some of the **puppy crate training tips** below to make the crate inviting to your puppy - always take it slowly. Put the crate in the room with you and your puppy, leave the crate door open wide.

1. Drop a **few tasty treats** in and around the crate and let your puppy clean them up. Be sure to give heaps of encouragement and then praise if your puppy bravely steps into the crate.
2. If your puppy has a favorite **dog bed or blanket** put this inside the crate to encourage him and to make it more homely for him.
3. Feed your puppy all of his meals in the crate (door still open).
4. With your puppy outside the crate place a chew toy inside the crate and close the door. Your puppy will literally **beg you to let him at it!** Open up the door, let him in and praise his efforts (this method has proved very successful for my dogs).
5. When your puppy is not around tie a **chew toy (like a stuffed kong)** inside the crate and leave the door open. Let him discover the "treasure" and leave him inside to enjoy the find.
6. When your puppy is comfortable in the crate **close the door and feed some treats to him through the mesh.** To start with just leave the door closed for 10 seconds then gradually increase the duration. Don't increase the time too quickly, if your dog becomes distressed or whines you are moving too fast.
7. Build up the amount of time he is in the crate slowly, first when you are in the room, then step outside the room for a short time. Your puppy's first really long stretch in the crate is ideally overnight with the crate in your bedroom.

## Puppy Crate Training - Shaping the Behavior

I find that the tips outlined above are more than enough to get most puppies comfortable in their crates. If you are having trouble with a difficult or nervous pup try this puppy crate training exercise to shape the desired behavior.

1. Place the crate in an area where you and your puppy spend time together - leave the crate door open.
2. Any time your puppy shows any interest in the crate (like a look) praise him/her and throw him a tasty treat. Repeat this over and over.
3. You'll find that your puppy soon becomes very interested in his crate. This step asks more of your puppy. Don't praise and treat only a glance at the crate now, wait until your pup walks over towards the crate, then **enthusiastically praise and reward** with a treat.
4. Repeat Step 3 many times and then make it harder again for your puppy to earn a treat. Hold off with your praise and treats until your puppy actually steps in the crate now. **Repetition and reinforcing the desired behavior is the key.**
5. Now your pup should be popping in and out of the crate to work for his treats. Now you hold off with your praise and treats until your puppy goes into the crate and sits down.
6. The final step is to have your puppy step inside the crate, sit down and then you will close the crate door (only for a few seconds to start with) and feed some treats through the door.
7. Attach a cue word to this process such as "**bedtime**" or "**go to crate**". Say your cue word every time your puppy steps inside the crate - he will soon associate the word with the act of getting in to the crate.