



Dog Learning

The Dog Learning Centre

Crate Training

A crate is a safe and secure environment for your dog. Think of it like their bedroom! It is a training aid and helps because;

- It keeps the dog safe when you are busy
- It can be used as a calm station for your over-excited dog
- It protects your home from damage when you are out
- It can be transferred to the car or a holiday home

The crate must be big enough to allow your dog to stand up, turn around and stretch inside. You should put a water bowl inside and toys to keep your dog occupied. It should be placed in a quiet area, but it is beneficial if the dog can see/hear what is going on. Puppies should not be left for long periods of time in a crate and please be aware that dogs can tip their water bowls over, resulting in wet bedding which is not good for them to sleep in.

If the crate is near the back door, this can prevent accidents in the early stages of toilet training. It is advisable to move the crate near your bedroom during the night. It comforts puppy to be near you and can prevent isolated feelings and whining. If your dog settles away from you, then fantastic news! A dog that is able to settle itself can be left without becoming distressed and causing alarm to neighbours. This is an extremely positive thing.

The crate needs to be welcoming to your dog. You want them to feel safe and happy within their 'bedroom' and to have a positive association therefore feed them in it, give them chews or stuffed kongs whilst in the crate. Every time you put the dog in the crate be sure to give them a biscuit or other food treat.

In the early stages, you can split the crate in to two sections on the floor, one half

bedding and the other newspaper or toilet mats. The dog can use the mat to toilet if it is desperate – when you gotta go, you gotta go! Change the mat after each toileting incident (with the pup not present) and do not scold them for this.

They don't like the crate? Try this.....

Leave the crate door open so he can come and go as he pleases and use high value treats to reinforce that the crate is a good thing! Good things happen here! Pop treats near the cage door at the start, then begin to put them nearer the crate, then gradually pop treats inside the crate door and further in thereafter

Once the dog is entering the crate, you can put a cue on it, such as 'Go to bed'. The dog will then associate the cue with the action. All training has to go at the dog's pace. Avoid physically pushing your dog in, as this will only (most likely) create fear/suspicion and a negative association with the crate and yourself. You may have to gently lift/encourage a young pup in to the crate.

Once your dog is happy to go in to the crate, you can feed him in there and provide high value treats, such as kongs/puzzle feeders/licki mats. Leave the door open for the first while. When you feel the dog is comfortable, push the door over and hang about, suggesting to the dog that this is no big deal!

When you know puppy has toileted, you can place a treat (as suggested previously) in to the crate and when puppy goes in, close the door over. At this stage, leave the pup for a few moments (unless they are very distressed, in which case please comfort them as this can create separation issues) and keep the door closed for short periods.

So long as all associations are positive with the crate, your dog should settle quickly.

When letting your dog out the crate, remain in a calm state so that the dog does not get too excited, noisy and perhaps even toilet! Take the dog to their toilet area as soon as they come out of the crate.

The crate can be used to house your dog when you are out of the home, at work, in the shower, during family meal times and when you have visitors (these may be frightened or dislike dogs).

The crate is not for punishment, but should be used as a tool to house a tired or over excited dog.