

Crate Training For Your Puppy

by Dy Witt

Teaching your puppy crate training is the first and best step in his life. It makes all the other steps in his training go so much smoother, much like a solid foundation makes for a superior wall. Establishing you as the Alpha member of his "pack" is one very good reason for starting your puppy in a crate when he is very young.

Another reason for crate training is that dogs love predictability. To know what is going to happen in any given situation makes him happy, and more apt to be the best-behaved dog he can possibly be.

A strong crate is the very basis of good puppy training. A wire crate with a lock is the best kind. Make sure it is large enough for him to stand up and turn around. But not so large that he can roam and wander around. A too-large crate will inhibit house breaking.

A crate that is just the right size will be perceived as his "nest", where puppies never "go potty". They will learn to hold it if you don't make a prison out of it. Never leave a puppy under 8 weeks longer than one hour in his crate. He will soil it, after struggling and suffering as long as he can. Put a nice pad in there with a bone. Start with placing a tasty treat in there, he will go in and get it. Do this several times without closing the door, let him come in and out freely for an hour or so. Praise him highly each time he goes in, make it all very pleasant.

Then when his attention is on his treat, close the door. Praise him quietly, say, "What a good boy, it's ok, such a good boy!" In 10 or 20 seconds, no longer, let him out without a word, no praise, just a pat. Do this for increasingly longer intervals, but do not give him a chance to get upset. You can do this several times the first day.

Make sure every training session ends on a happy note, this is crucial.

Once he sees the crate is his own private territory, he will go in there on his own, expecting treats and your attention. When he does, say, "Wanna crate?" with a happy face while getting his treats. Start leaving the room while he is in there for 2 minutes and onward, gradually. When you return, don't make a fuss, just walk over and open the crate. In 3 days he will be officially crate-trained, ready to be left alone for an hour, no longer at first. Leave him gradually longer, slowly and carefully.