



The DOs and DON'Ts of Crate Training Your Dog or Puppy

While crate training may not be appropriate in every situation, it can be an extremely helpful management tool when introducing a new dog to your home. Crate training can speed up the housetraining process and can help prevent unwanted or destructive behavior when you are unable to supervise or are not at home. A crate is also a safe way to transport your pet in your car and can serve as his “home away from home” when traveling to unfamiliar places.

DOs

- DO select a wire crate with a tray that pulls out from the bottom. They are easier to clean and provide your dog with a view of his surroundings.
- DO choose a crate appropriately-sized for your dog – it should be large enough for him to sit, stand, turn around and lie down comfortably.
- DO get a divider panel for your crate if you are adopting a young pup and are purchasing a crate large enough for him as an adult. This way you can continually adjust the size of the space inside of the crate to accommodate your dog as he grows.
- DO make the crate comfortable and inviting by placing soft, washable bedding inside.
- DO place your dog’s crate in the quietest corner of one of the most used rooms in the house (such as a family room or den) so that your dog does not associate crating with feeling isolated or banished.
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- DO introduce your dog to the crate gradually. At first, get him comfortable going in and out on his own by tossing a few treats or toys inside, without closing him in. Begin feeding meals in the crate to help create a positive association. Once your dog is comfortable going in and out on his own, close the door briefly while he eats his treat or meal. Gradually build up the length of time that your dog is spending in crate, initially staying nearby and working up to moving away into the next room or to another area of the house. Once your dog is comfortable staying quietly in the crate for one half-hour with you out of sight, you can begin leaving him crated for short periods of time when you are not at home or letting him sleep there at night. Keep in mind that it might take several days or even weeks for your dog to feel comfortable in the crate.
- DO keep the crate interesting by tying toys to the back or by leaving something special, such as a special treat or food-filled Kong toy or sterilized bone, with your dog while you are gone. Remove the special treat upon your return so that your dog learns that his crate is a wonderful place to be when you are away, and that special treat is only good in there.

DON'Ts

- Don’t force your dog into the crate, ever.
- Don’t rush introducing the crate. While crate training works well with most dogs, your dog’s past

experiences with confinement will affect the pace of the introduction process. There are some dogs that will resist any type of close confinement and obviously crating is not appropriate if it makes your dog anxious to the point that he may injure himself attempting to escape.

- Don't keep your dog confined for longer than he can be expected to hold his bladder or bowels. For young puppies, this means that they can only be crated for a few hours at a time. An adult dog can be crated for longer periods, but should be well exercised and have had an opportunity to eliminate before being confined.
- Don't let your dog out of the crate when he is whining, or you will teach him that noise-making gets him out of the crate. Wait for silence or at least a lull in the whining before letting him out. Sometimes, however, it may be difficult to tell if he is whining because he needs to eliminate. Initially, try ignoring the whining. If your dog is testing you, he should stop whining in a relatively short period of time. If he continues whining for more than a few minutes, he may need to eliminate. Wait for a lull in the whining, release him when he is quiet, and take him outside immediately to eliminate.
- Don't scold or punish your dog while he is in his crate. Keep his experiences in the crate positive – if anything, praise him, feed him treats or give him more attention than usual while he is in the crate.
- Don't crate your dog for an extended period of time unless he has been well-exercised (tired out!) beforehand.
- Don't put newspaper or housetraining pads in the crate. These materials will encourage your dog to eliminate, which is to opposite of what you want him to do while confined. The crate is designed to take advantage of your dog's natural instinct to "hold it" because he instinctively will not want to soil the area where he sleeps.
- Don't make a big deal of your departures and arrivals. Crate and ignore your dog for twenty minutes prior to your departure. When you arrive home, let him out of the crate and take him outside immediately to eliminate, but keep the greeting interaction with your dog low-key. It is also a good idea to crate him periodically for short periods when you are home as well so that he does not associate crating with being left alone.
- Don't abuse the crate. It is a useful management tool, but your dog shouldn't live in a cage day and night, with few opportunities for playtime and "people" time. If your dog is being crated for any extended periods during the day, it is a good idea to allow him to sleep in someone's room at night. Baby gate him in your room at night, if necessary, to prevent him from roaming freely.