

From the editors of



# **Crate Training Made Easy**



Dogs who have positive crate experiences when they're young almost always voluntarily hang out in their crates when they have the chance to do so.

## CRATE TRAINING MADE EASY

### Teaching your new dog these critical lessons will pay off all his life.

By Pat Miller, CBCC-KA, CPDT-KA, CDBC

Some twenty years ago I got a new puppy. Keli was an Australian Kelpie, acquired by the Marin Humane Society to be my Canine Field Agent, partner and assistant in my daily duties as an Animal Services Officer. Being selected for this program was a huge honor and responsibility. I was determined to do everything right in caring for and training my pup.

I had heard about a new technique in puppy-raising, called crate-training, where you put your dog in a small kennel at night, and whenever you had to leave him alone. I was skeptical. Put a puppy in a cage? It sounded cruel! Still, determined to provide cutting-edge care for my pup in this cutting-edge program, I decided to try it. After all, the puppy would be with me most of the time in the animal services truck, so we were really only talking about nighttime crating.

Unconvinced but determined to try, prior to bringing the pup home I purchased a crate and set it up in my bedroom.

When I brought the 10-week-old pup home, I braced myself for the two most trying challenges of puppy-raising: house training and chewing. I was about to be pleasantly surprised. The first night in her crate, Keli cried for a few minutes – typical behavior on the first night away from her mother and littermates. But then she curled up and went to sleep.

At 2 a.m. she woke me with insistent crying. She was telling me she needed to go out – WOW! I got up, took her out to pee, then returned her to the crate and went back to bed. After another perfunctory period of protest she went back to sleep. When I woke up the next morning her crate was clean, I didn't have to worry about stepping in – or cleaning up – puppy piles or puddles, and thanks to the boundaries of the crate, there were no chewed up shoes or electrical cords. My skepticism started to fade.

Two nights later it vanished completely when I went to put Keli in her crate and found Caper, my three-year-old Bull Terrier mix, already curled up on the soft pad in Keli's airline kennel. Caper looked up at me and thumped her tail several times, clearly saying, "These are cool! Can I have one of my own?" I went out the following day and bought Caper her own crate, and I've been a crate convert ever since.

#### Home sweet crate

The crate is a sturdy plastic, fiberglass, wood, metal or wire box just big enough for a dog to stand up, turn around and lie down in comfortably. It can be used with the door open, at your convenience, or with the door closed, when mandatory confinement is called for.

When the crate is properly introduced using positive training methods, most dogs love their crates. Canines are den animals and a crate is a modern den – a dog's personal portable bedroom that he can retire to when he wants to escape from the trials and tribulations of toddlers and other torments. He can take it with him when he stays at boarding kennels, and when he travels with you and sleeps in hotels and motels.



Crates are a modern den. Putting a blanket on top of crate not only makes the crate more den-like but helps keep it warm.

Owners love crates because they generally make house training a breeze and prevent damage to the house, furnishings, and personal possessions. They can give a new puppy-owner peace of mind when Baby Buddy has to be left home alone. They can be used for a positive time-out when visitors tire of Buddy's antics, or when he insists on begging at the dinner table.

The crate is also a great tool for convincing owners of backyard dogs to bring their hounds into their homes (where they belong). By bringing the dog indoors but keeping him confined, at least at night, hesitant owners can ease their fears about mayhem and ruined rugs while at least partially integrating the deprived dog into the family

### **Not a prison**

A crate is not a place of punishment. Never force your dog or puppy into a crate in anger. Even if he has earned a time-out through inappropriate behavior, don't yell at him, throw him in the crate, and slam the door. Instead, quietly remove the dog from the scene and invite him into his crate to give both of you an opportunity to calm down.

Nor is a crate appropriate for long-term confinement. While some puppies are able to make it through an eight-hour stretch in a crate

at night, you should be sleeping nearby and available to take your pup out if he tells you he needs to go.

During the day, a puppy should not be asked to stay in a crate longer than two to four hours at a time; an adult dog no more than six to eight hours. Longer than that and you risk forcing Buddy to eliminate in his crate, which is a very bad thing, since it breaks down his instinctive inhibitions against soiling his den. Dogs who learn to soil their dens can be extremely difficult, sometimes nearly impossible, to house train – a common behavior problem for puppies from unclean puppy mills

### **Training do's and don'ts**

Most puppies, even the majority of adult dogs, can be crate-trained with relative ease. Remember that the crate should be just large enough for your dog to stand up, turn around, and lie down comfortably. He doesn't need to be able to play football in it. If you want to get one large enough for your puppy to grow into, block off the back so he has just enough room, and increase the space as he grows. Cover the floor of the crate with a rug or soft pad to make it comfortable and inviting, and you're ready to begin training.

Start with the crate door open, and toss some irresistibly yummy treats inside. If he is hesitant to go in after them, toss the treats close enough to the doorway that he can stand outside and just poke his nose in the crate to eat them. If you are training with a clicker or other reward marker, each time he eats a treat, Click! the clicker (or say "Yes!" if you are using a verbal marker).

Gradually toss the treats farther and farther into the crate until he steps inside to get them. Continue to Click! each time he eats a treat. When he enters the crate easily to get the treats, Click! and offer him a treat while he is still inside. If he is willing to stay inside, keep clicking and treating. If he comes out that's okay too, just toss another treat inside and wait for him to re-enter. Don't try to force him to stay in the crate.

When he enters the crate to get the treat without hesitation, you can start using a verbal cue such as "Go to bed" as he goes in, so that you will eventually be able to send him into his crate on just a verbal cue.

When he happily stays in the crate in anticipation of a Click! and treat, gently swing the door closed. Don't latch it! Click! and treat, then open the door. Repeat this step, gradually increasing the length of time the door stays closed before you Click! Sometimes you can Click! and reward without opening the door right away.

When your dog will stay in the crate with the door closed for at least 10 seconds without any signs of anxiety, close the door, latch it, and take one step away from the crate. Click!, return to the crate, reward, and open the door. Repeat this step, varying the time and distance you leave the crate.

Don't always make it longer and farther – intersperse long ones with shorter ones, so it doesn't always get harder and harder for him. Start increasing the number of times you Click! and treat without opening the door, but remember that a Click! or a "Yes!" always gets a treat.

It's a good idea to leave the crate open when you aren't actively training. Toss treats and his favorite toys in the crate when he's not looking, so he never knows what wonderful surprises he might find there. You can even feed him his meals in the crate – with the door open – to help him realize that his crate is a truly wonderful place.

If at any time during the program your dog whines or fusses about being in the crate, don't let him out until he stops crying! This is the biggest mistake owners make when crate training! If you let Buddy out when he is fussing, you will teach him that fussing gets him free.

If, however, he panics to the point of risking injury to himself, you must let him out. You may have a dog with a separation anxiety challenge. A crate is generally not recommended for dogs with separation anxiety, since they tend to panic in close confinement. If you believe your dog has a separation anxiety problem, stop the crate training and consult a behaviorist or a trainer who has experience with this behavior.

Instead of letting your dog out whenever he fusses or whines, wait for a few seconds of quiet, then Click! and reward. Then back up a step or two in the training program until he is again successful at the task you've set out for him. When your dog is doing well at that level again, increase the difficulty in smaller increments, and vary the amount of time, rather than making

it progressively longer. For example, instead of going from 5 seconds to 10 to 15, start with 5 seconds, then 7, then 3, then 8, and so on

### **Maintaining success**

Sometimes dogs and often puppies can do the whole crate training program in one day. Some will take several days, and a few will take weeks or more. Once your dog is crate trained, you have a valuable behavior management tool for life. Respect it. If you abuse it by keeping Buddy confined too much, for too long a period of time, or by using it as punishment, he may learn to dislike it. Even though he goes to bed willingly and on cue, reward him often enough to keep the response happy and quick. Keep your verbal "Go To Bed" cue light and happy. Don't ever let anyone tease or punish him in his crate. (Kids can be especially obnoxious about this. Watch them!)

All of my dogs quickly learn the "Go to bed" routine. I don't even have to use the verbal cue; usually, when I emerge from brushing my teeth, they are already curled up in their crates for the night.

## **Crate Difficulties**

### **Helping more dogs find contentment in the close quarters of a crate.**

By Pat Miller , CBCC-KA, CPDT-KA, CDBC

The topic turned to crating on one of my trainer e-mail lists recently. I was horrified to read that some shelters and rescue groups refuse to adopt to prospective owners who intend to use a crate with their dogs. What madness is this?

As I followed the discussion, I realized that the negative crate perspective stemmed from

concerns of “overcrating.” Apparently some owners crate their dogs all day while they’re at work, let them out for a couple of hours when they come home, and then crate the dogs all night while everyone is sleeping. This, some shelters fear, is too much time in a crate for a dog’s physical and mental health

### **They’re right**

The crate is an invaluable management tool. Like any training tool, it can be misused. Even when used properly, it’s not necessarily the appropriate tool for every dog in every circumstance. The discussion that follows may help you decide when, and whether, it’s the right choice for you and your canine pal

### **Overcrating**

A properly used crate can be the answer to your housetraining prayers. I was astounded by the ease with which I was able to housetrain my Kelpie pup. I also, however, was in the enviable position of being able to take my baby dog to work with me, so I was never tempted – or compelled – to crate her for longer than she could “hold it.”

If you’re a normal person whose boss frowns on dogs at work, you simply can’t crate your pup all day while you’re gone. He’ll be forced to eliminate in his crate, breaking down his inhibitions against soiling his own den – the very inhibitions you rely on to be able to accomplish house-training.

A general rule of thumb is that puppies can “hold it” during the day for up to one hour longer than they are months old. In other words, your eight-week-old baby dog can be crated for perhaps up to three hours during the day. They can usually go somewhat longer at night because metabolism slows, but it’s a rare two-month-old who can go through the night without a potty break.

So, you can only crate your pup during an 8- to 10-hour workday if you can arrange for at least two bathroom breaks. One quick run home at lunch won’t be enough, at least not until he’s five to six months old.

In addition to performing necessary bodily

functions, a growing pup needs to move around in order to develop properly. Some runaround time during the day helps him develop mentally and physically, practicing skills and learning lessons he can’t make up later in life.

Finally, a pup who spends his entire day in a crate stores up mental and physical energy. When an owner comes home exhausted after working all day, she’s rarely in a state of mind to cope with pent-up puppy frenzies, or to provide adequate exercise and mental stimulation to make up for a day of relative deprivation. The relationship suffers, and the pup gets relegated to the backyard, alone, or worse – put back into the crate.

While adult dogs are more physically capable of “holding it” for extended periods than puppies, it’s still not appropriate for a dog to be routinely crated for 10 hours. Hence, the concerns of adoption agencies.

### **Solution for overcrating**

Alternatives to crating include finding alternative confinement options, arranging for multiple bathroom breaks, or finding a daycare situation of some kind.

Some owners simply leave their dogs – including puppies – outside in a fenced yard during the day. This allows the dog total freedom to poop and pee at will. It also leaves him vulnerable to threats from the environment – theft, poisoning, accidental escape, snakes, raccoons, skunks, coyotes. I even met a pup once with a huge scar across his back – souvenir of a brief flight, fortunately aborted, in the talons of a Golden Eagle.

Outdoor confinement also leaves the dog free to practice inappropriate behaviors such as digging, escaping, and barking, and exposes him to the extremes of weather.

It might be safer to confine your pup indoors, either in a small puppy-proofed room such as a bathroom, or in a secure exercise pen. This requires newspapering the floor, and perhaps encouraging the dog to use one of the commercial pee pad products or a litter box, essentially giving him permission to eliminate in

the house.

This solution has risks as well. Your pup can learn to rip up vinyl flooring and chew on cabinets if he's loose in a bathroom. He may be able to knock over his exercise pen if it's not well secured, climb out (some come with lids), or get a leg caught between the bars. If you plan to use an ex-pen, get him used to it while you're home, to be sure none of these things are likely to happen.

Multiple bathroom breaks may be easier than you think. If there are two adults in the household, perhaps you can stagger your lunches – one at 11am, one at 1pm – to give him two breaks. If not, a commercial pet sitter can take a daily turn at potty breaks. Other options include friends, neighbors, or family members who live close enough to provide the service until the pup is older. You might even find a local teenage dog lover who would cherish the opportunity to earn some spending money.

Finally, Spot may just need to go somewhere else during the day. Commercial doggie daycare centers are increasingly popular and available

### Crate-soiling

If Spot eliminates in his crate even when not overcrated, your first course of action is to rule out medical problems. Loose stools, a urinary tract infection, or other incontinence problems make it impossible for a dog to hold it for normal periods of time.

Assuming all is well, there are several other possible causes of crate soiling:

- Your dog has been routinely overcrated in the past, and was forced to soil his crate. His inhibitions against soiling his den have been damaged. He now thinks the crate is an acceptable bathroom.
- Your dog isn't eliminating outdoors before being crated.
- Your dog has separation anxiety (SA) and is voiding his bladder and bowels during his SA panic attack.

### Solution for crate-soiling

Your approach to Spot's crate-soiling behavior depends on the cause. If he has learned to soil his crate, it may help to change his bedding, or remove bedding altogether until he's retrained. Bedding that absorbs fluids, such as a blanket, can make it more comfortable for your dog to be in his soiled crate. His current bedding also may have become his preferred substrate. Try newspaper instead, a square of heavy duty compressed foam rubber (the kind used for flooring), or no bedding. A tether may be a reasonable alternative to nighttime crating.

Make sure his crate is the correct size – big enough for him to stand up, turn around, and lie down comfortably. If it's too large he can potty in one end and sleep in the other.

Perhaps you're just not making sure Spot eliminates outside before you crate him. In your morning rush to get to work on time, you let him out in the backyard and assume he empties before he comes back in. That may be an incorrect assumption. If it's cold or rainy, he may have huddled on the back porch, waiting to be let back in. Perhaps he was distracted digging for moles under a bush, or barking at the kids walking past the yard on their way to school. Maybe he gets a cookie for coming back into the house, so he's skipping the step where he's supposed to go pee on the grass first. It could be a substrate preference problem – he wants to pee on grass, and all he can find is snow!

Set your alarm to awaken you 15 minutes earlier than normal, so you can go out with Spot on leash before and after he eats his breakfast to make sure he's empty when you crate him. If he's reluctant to out in inclement weather, create a sheltered potty spot, so he doesn't have to eliminate with rain or snow dumping on his head, or strong winds buffeting him. Would you be able to "do your business" under those conditions?

If he's determined to go on grass, it's the dead of winter and there's no grass available, you may need to scrape snow away from the grass in his sheltered potty spot or provide indoor-grown grass until you can teach him a new substrate preference. Maybe AstroTurf would work!

### Refusing to go into the crate

Dogs who refuse to enter their crates may have never been crate trained, or the crating process was somehow abused. Spot may have been overcrated and now resists entering a den he fears he'll be forced to soil. Perhaps someone previously used his crate as punishment, or forcibly crated him. He may have had a bad experience in a crate that may have been improperly secured and rolled with him in it, or by having loud noises or other fear-inducing stimuli occur while he was crated.

### Learning to love the crate

Whatever the reason, you'll need to embark on a program of counter-conditioning and



As a first step with dogs who are reluctant to go in their in crates, lock away their favorite toy or treat inside. Let their anticipation build before opening the door to let them go in and get it.

desensitization to change Spot's association from bad to good, and retrain his crating behavior

Start by scattering yummy stuff around the outside of his crate, placing a couple of tidbits just inside the door so he can stick his head in to get them. Gradually toss more yummys inside the crate to entice him further in. When he's going in easily, start handfeeding tidbits while he's inside, to encourage him to stay in. If you use a clicker, you can now begin to click! and give him a treat for going into the crate.

When he'll go in and stay calmly inside the crate while you feed treats, close the door gently, feed treats through the door, and then let him out. Gradually increase the length of time you keep the door closed, until he's quite comfortable with this step. Then take a step away from the crate, click! and return to give him his treat. Continue this process until he is happy to enter and stay in his crate

You can play another crating game to motivate your dog to "kennel." Take something scrumptious, like a meaty knucklebone, and put it in the crate. Show it to your dog, then close the door with him outside the crate. Let him spend some time trying to get into the closed crate to get at the bone, then open the door allowing him to zoom in (and back out, if he wants) to claim his prize.

To keep crating fun for your dog, be sure to practice crating games often, not just when he's going to be crated for extended periods. You can also give him food-stuffed Kongs and other interactive toys to keep him happy in his crate.

If your dog absolutely refuses to enter the crate, get one that comes apart. Take the top off, then start the counter-conditioning process

### Demand barking in crate

Sometimes barking happens because the dog really needs to go. While it's critically important to heed your dog's bathroom calls, it's equally important not to succumb to crate barking when it's simply his insistent plea to get out and play, or cuddle. The more often you let him out on demand, the more the behavior is reinforced, and the harder it will be to ever successfully train him to stay quietly in his crate.

### **Solution to barking in crate**

If you're just starting your dog's crating lessons, be sure he empties his bowels and bladder before you begin, so you know he doesn't have to go. Ignore his barking, and let him out of the crate when he's quiet. At first, he may be quiet for just a few seconds. Mark the quiet with a "Yes!" or a click! so he knows it's the quiet behavior that gets him out of the crate. Gradually increase the length of quiet time before you let him out.

If your dog has already learned to demand-bark to gain freedom you'll follow the same procedure as above. However it will take longer to extinguish the behavior because it's been previously reinforced. Your dog is likely to go through an extinction burst – more and/or louder barking, as he tries to make this formerly successful behavior work again. Be strong; if you give in during an extinction burst you will reinforce your dog for an even more intense behavior, and it will be even harder to make it stop.

At first, listen for and reinforce even very brief pauses in barking. You have to show your dog what behavior will work – quiet – if you want him to offer more of it.

### **Panicking in the crate**

This is very different from demand barking. Some dogs, particularly many of those with separation anxiety (SA), can't tolerate the close confinement of a crate. They experience a full-blown panic attack, and frantically try to escape from their prison.

A panicked dog's efforts to escape from his mental and emotional anguish may include hysterical, non-stop barking and howling – for hours and hours without pause; frantic attempts to bite and claw his way out – often breaking teeth and ripping out nails in the process; and stress-induced urination and defecation – which he proceeds to paint all over the walls of his crate as he thrashes around.

### **Solution to panic: Don't crate**

You cannot subject a panicked dog to these conditions. You must address the SA problem

through behavior modification, and may someday be able to use a crate with your dog, if you are successful in modifying the SA. In the meantime, look for doggie daycare-type management solutions

### **Aggression in crate**

Some dogs become ferocious in their crates, usually manifesting territorial aggression, fear aggression, or resource guarding. The behavior is alarming, especially to an unsuspecting passer-by – human, canine, feline, or other – who inadvertently walks too close to the crate and is greeted with a fierce roar and crash when the dog lunges into the side of his kennel

### **Manage aggression in crates**

Management is your best approach to this behavior, followed by behavior modification.

Dogs who are aggressive in their crates shouldn't be subjected to environments in which the behavior is constantly triggered. These dogs should not, for example, be left crated and unattended at canine sporting events. If children are in the household, they must not be allowed to approach Spot in his crate.

Some dogs will crate calmly if the crate is covered to reduce the stimuli that triggers their aggression. Others do well as long as there's nothing of high-value to be guarded in the crate, such as a favorite toy or stuffed Kong.

If Spot is fearful, taking refuge in his crate out of fear, be sure to do nothing to intimidate him while he's crated. No reaching in, for example, to remove bowls, toys, or dog from crate. You may do better to refrain from crating a fearful dog until he's become more confident with you, to avoid setting him up for crate aggression.

To modify crate aggression, return to your old friends, counter-conditioning and desensitization. If your dog is aggressive to passers-by, arm yourself with a large supply of high-value treats (canned chicken, rinsed and drained, works well), and sit next to the crate. When your dog alerts to a member of the trigger species (whether it is dog or human) passing



at a noticeable but low-arousal distance, begin feeding him treats, non-stop, until that someone is gone. Each time the trigger appears, wait for your dog to notice, then start feeding him tiny tidbits of chicken, non-stop, until the trigger is gone

Keep watching your dog's reaction. You're looking for his response to the appearance of the trigger to change from wary or alert to "Yay! Where's my chicken!" When you get the latter reaction consistently, move the trigger closer and repeat the lessons, until the trigger can pass next to the crate.

If your approach triggers an aggression response, do lots of practice sessions where you walk up to the crate and drop chicken into it, so your dog learns to associate your approach with good stuff. Never punish your dog for being aggressive in his crate – you're likely to make the behavior worse.

### Crating choices

Some dogs crate best in wire crates, others seem to prefer the plastic airline-style kennels. Portable, collapsible soft crates have become hugely popular. Some owners only crate through the puppy stage, others use crates throughout their dogs' entire lives. Both are acceptable.

Despite the potential for crating woes with some dogs, I remain a staunch fan of this invaluable management tool. We can educate owners about proper crate use to avoid overcrating and other abuses. The crate is so useful, it distresses me to hear that some well-meaning shelter folks have such a low opinion of it. Let's not throw the puppy out with the bath water!.

# More Perspectives on Crate Training

## This valuable tool is not a prison, but a means to a training end.

By Dr. Ian Dunbar

Crates are perhaps second only to choke collars as the most misused training equipment forced upon dogs. However, unlike choke collars, there is a terrific training principle behind the use of crates

A crate, or, in other words, short-term close confinement, can be used to help dogs teach themselves two very important skills. The first is eliminating only when and where it is appropriate. The second skill is keeping out of trouble – behaving appropriately in the house. Without these two skills, a dog doesn't have much of a chance in this world.

But before I tell you how to help your dog learn these skills, let me say what crates should not be used for.

### What crates are NOT for

They are not for punishing your dog for doing something wrong; if used in this way, the dog will quickly learn to avoid ever going in the crate, or how to be as obnoxious as possible in order to get let out.

They are not for "warehousing" a number of dogs, so you don't have too many underfoot. I have to say that breeders abuse the use of crates more than all other dog owners. You often see breeders who don't actually want to live with the dogs they breed and raise; they use crates to contain their "merchandise," keep it out of the way until it's ready to sell. This is in itself

objectionable, even more so when they force this prison concept of the crate upon the people who buy their dogs and puppies. I can't tell you how many people I've spoken to who faithfully lock their perfectly well-behaved dogs in crates for hours every day because the breeder they bought the dog from told them they had to.

### **Puppies are babies**

Crates are also not for keeping puppies out of trouble all day. Puppies are just like babies; they need to be watched every minute, and few puppy owners seem to understand this. People make arrangements for their new babies to be supervised when they are at work or school or going to the movies and so on; they have to learn to do the same with puppies.

Recently, I was talking about this to a dog trainer friend from Manhattan. She was discussing this with a number of students in a dog training class, and several people were having trouble accepting it. Finally, frustrated, she told them, "Look, I'm sorry, I must end the class now, because my two-year-old daughter is at home on her own and I've been away for several hours, so I should get back and see how she is." Everyone went, "WHAT?" And she said, "See? Actually, I don't have a child, but you accept that you can't leave one kind of baby alone; why is it any less dangerous or cruel to abandon another one?"

When the puppy gets older, say, six to 12 months old, you can begin leaving it for longer periods of time. However, you can't just go out the door and hope for the best. You have to teach your puppy how to cope with short-term close confinement, and later, with long-term confinement.

Simply stated, crates are not for long-term close confinement of puppies or adult dogs. They are too small; any animal suffers when it is forced to stay that closely confined for more than a few hours.

### **Long-term confinement**

Until your new dog is house-trained, you can't give it the run of the house all day while you are at work – it would get into trouble – but you can't put it in the crate, either.

In my opinion, you can view each mistake a dog makes while you're gone all day as 20 mistakes, because one puddle, or one little chew, sets the precedent for many other mistakes. And when the dog's bladder and teeth get bigger, and bigger mistakes are made, the dog will be put outside, where it will then learn to dig and bark, and then the neighbors will complain, and then it goes into the garage as a temporary stop, before it goes to the humane society to play the Lotto of life, where only one out of eight dogs win

So, instead, when you're away from home, you use long-term confinement to keep him or her out of trouble. The most suitable place for teaching long-term confinement would be a bathroom, one with all the toilet paper, towels, shower curtains, and carpets removed. You'd leave only a few things in there: the dog's bed (which could be a cozy blanket placed in a crate with the door open), an adequate supply of water, some safe hollow chew toys which are stuffed with food treats, and the dog's toilet. For the latter, I suggest something like two short rolls of turf on a sheet of plastic. The benefit of this, rather than those commercial puppy pads, is the dog will train itself to urinate on turf or dirt..

If your new dog is extremely anxious, and it takes desperate measures to escape, such as tearing the bathroom door apart, you can't use this method. You will need to consult a professional for advice on dealing with about extreme separation anxiety.

The long-term confinement method is a temporary measure, only meant to keep your new dog out of trouble until you have the time to potty- and house-train it

### **Crates for "potty training"**

All right. Back to what crates are for! The first proper use of a crate, as I said, is for teaching a puppy or dog to eliminate only when and where it is appropriate.

You can teach this to an adult dog within three days. This is something we did with the San Francisco SPCA in the mid-1980s, when I started the animal behavior program there. We taught the volunteers how to take home dogs that weren't house-trained and house-train

them using the umbilical cord method, where the dog is tied to your waist, so you can watch it every second. Then, every hour on the hour you take it outside, to the place where you want it to eliminate. When they do, you give them three liver treats, take them back inside, and let them off the leash for a little while. If they do not eliminate, they do not get a treat, and they go back inside still on the leash. By four days of this, there were no longer any mistakes; the dog thoroughly wants to use its dog toilet.

Puppies may or may not take a little longer to potty-train. Your consistency will make all the difference

When at home, confine the puppy all the time that you can not watch it 110 percent. Few dogs or puppies will soil their bedrooms unless they are really desperate; don't keep the puppy (or a dog, for that matter) in there long enough to get desperate

Every hour on the hour, release the puppy, saying, "Let's go potty!" and run with it to its doggie toilet. (Running is helpful because you don't want an accident to happen on the way to the toilet, and because running "jiggles" its bladder and bowels.) Most puppies will urinate within two minutes. If it does, give it three liver treats, and go back in the house. By doing this, you actually give the puppy the desire to wait until you come home and take it outside to eliminate, because that's the only time it can cash in its urine and feces for liver treats.

Once it has eliminated, then you can take it back into the house and turn it loose, where your empty puppy can spend some time exploring the house under supervision. Then you've only got to watch that it doesn't chew the wrong things! After an hour or so, put it back into the crate, and start the process over again.

However, if it doesn't eliminate, it goes back in the crate for another hour, and you start over again

### House-training

"Potty-training" is what most people are worried about, of course, but what I call "house-training" is just as important, and, fortunately, it's a nice side-effect of crate-training. In just a matter of days, the dog will learn that every time he is

confined, he gets to chew on toys, and soon, he'll become addicted to chewing toys. That means he won't destroy the rest of your house, and it means he won't become a recreational barker. He'll still alert when the doorbell rings, but recreational chewers almost never become one of those annoying chronic barkers

The dog will also self-train itself to settle down and to enjoy time spent when at home alone. After a week or two of this procedure, the adult dog can safely enjoy the full run of his home for the rest of his life. Again, I do not advise that puppies are left alone – for any length of time –



Don't close the door if the dog is scared or unhappy in the crate; the goal is to teach him to WANT to be in there!

until they are at least 12 months old

### Crate-training mistakes

The most common mistake I see people making with their crates is using it as a prison, or shoving the dog into the crate when he's been "bad." That's the very best way to teach him to avoid going into the crate at any time.

Instead, a dog should regard the crate as his play room, his doggie den. Confining a dog or puppy to a crate should be on par with confining your child to a room with a TV and VCR, a Sega, and a ton of toys. This is a simple thing to teach puppies. When a puppy is tired and hungry, you put him in the crate along with his dinner and some toys, and you leave him there. He'll eat his

dinner and fall asleep

If someone has taught an adult dog to have apprehensions about the crate, though, it will probably take at least a few days to overcome them. The process here will be a little different; he'll need additional time to get over his anxiety that he will be locked and trapped in the crate. While you are trying to convince him of this, don't lock and trap him in the crate!

### Training theory

The most common mistake I see people making with their crates is using it as a prison, or shoving the dog into the crate when he's been "bad." That's the very best way to teach him to avoid going into the crate at any time.

The point of "training" is to make the dog want to do what you want it to do. If your dog doesn't want to be in the crate – if he has only unpleasant associations with it – use your head. How can you make a dog want to be in the crate? Food is one way

First, I would always feed this dog in his crate, and make the most of his daily ration by feeding it to him in numerous courses – as many as a dozen, even. I'd put a little food in the crate, let him go in and eat it, and then let him out right after he's finished. I'd also make the final course of the day a big one, mixing his kibble with some juicy canned food. Put the bowl in the crate and then shut the door, with the dog on the outside, and let the dog think about this for a while. After a minute, he'll be saying, "Hey! Open the crate door! Let me in!" This is what training is all about. When your dog is pleading to get in its crate, let it in!

Here's another tactic. Throw a bit of kibble in the crate. Let him go in and get it; he'll come right out again. Do this three or four times. Then, throw a bit of kibble in, and when he goes in to get it, shut the door and immediately feed him another couple of bits of kibble through the bars. Then, let him out, and ignore him for three minutes. Then, put a bit of kibble in the crate, shut the door, feed him five bits of kibble through the bars, and then let him out and ignore him for five minutes.

The next time, put a bunch of kibble in a

Kong toy, along with some freeze-dried liver and a bit of honey in the Kong, so it is difficult to get the food out, and put the Kong in the crate. Let the dog in and shut the door. Before he's finished trying to get all the food out, after about 10 minutes, open the door, let him out, take the Kong away, and ignore him for five minutes.

What is the dog learning? "When I'm in the crate, my owner talks to me all the time, she sits next to me and reads me a book, and keeps feeding me. And there are toys in the crate. There are no toys anywhere else – that crate is OK!"

If a dog is expressing dissatisfaction with its lot, you haven't really done your job as a trainer to teach him to want to do what you want him to do.

Every dog develops favorite places to lie down. If you've crate-trained your dog properly, that favorite place will be in the crate with the door open. If the dog goes there of his own accord, it's a good sign that you have done a good job as a trainer

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