CRATE TRAINING YOUR NEW PUPPY OR DOG

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CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR NEW PUPPY OR DOG!

We know you and your pet will enjoy many happy years together. Your decision to crate train your dog is a wise one in many ways, and you’ll find that crate training will help you:

✓ Housebreaking - it’s a terrific tool for this
✓ Structure for your dog – crates are not cruel, but a safe environment your dog enjoys
✓ Comfort for you – knowing your puppy or dog is safe and happy

PROPER HOUSEBREAKING DEPENDS ON 4 FACTORS:

1. Proper confinement with the use of a crate or other small area where the dog will not eliminate.

2. Correct scheduling means taking (not sending) the puppy or dog out on a leash and making sure he eliminates.

3. Rewarding success means giving immediate praise and a treat for successful elimination outside, then some fun and freedom.

4. Preventing mistakes means direct supervision when the dog is not in confinement.

Crate the puppy or dog any time you are not directly supervising her: when you leave the house, while you sleep, and when you are home but busy or distracted. This will prevent accidents, as they can happen very quickly.

THE HOURS RULE

Puppies do not gain full bladder and bowel control until they are four months old. They typically can only “hold it” for the number of hours they are months old, plus one (e.g., a 3-month-old puppy = 4 hours of control). Therefore, puppies cannot be locked into a crate for longer than they are able to “hold it.” You never want to set the puppy up to eliminate inside the crate.

Set him up for frequent breaks and play.

If you must leave the pup for longer than his “hold time,” do not lock him in the crate. Put the open crate inside a slightly larger area such as a blocked-off kitchen corner or a bathroom. Place newspapers or puppy pads on the floor outside the crate (never inside the crate) so that he has a sleeping spot and an elimination spot. Once he is old enough to “hold it” for any length of time, you can remove this safe zone and just use the crate, making sure to take him out before he is put into the crate and after he is released.

SMALL BREEDS

Toy breeds have very small bladders, and their “hold times” are often less than the above rule — even as adults. They are also harder to housebreak. Please be patient!

NIGHTTIME

Nighttime is exempt from the hours rule, as the pup and the household are asleep and her metabolism slows down. As long as she isn’t being awakened frequently, is given no water or food after 7 pm, and is taken out just before bed, she should be able to “hold it” through the night (after 3-4 days in your home).

BEDDING

Do not put any bedding in the crate for a while. Puppies like to urinate on soft bedding and will then shove it aside so they don’t have to lie in it. This undermines the “never encourage elimination in the crate” rule. You can start using bedding when the pup has kept the crate completely clean for a few weeks. Make sure to check it frequently to make sure it is clean, as pups hide mess under bedding.
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SCHEDULING IS IMPORTANT
Get the puppy or dog on a schedule for eating, playing, walks, and breaks. This will help you both in your quest for cleanliness, and applies to any new dog in the home, not just puppies. Dogs like rules and consistency, and proper scheduling provides the structure that dogs need.

REWARD SUCCESS
Take the puppy or dog to the break area multiple times a day to give him a chance to eliminate. Do not just let him out in the yard, as he will get distracted and forget to go — until he comes back in. Go with him and keep him on leash until he goes. Then praise immediately and release him to play (if you are in a fenced area). If you make sure that elimination is the first order of business when you get outside, the pup will learn to “go” first and even on command. Be boring (do not speak to him or play) and consistent until you have success.

You can use small treats to reward elimination. But going from boring to excited when the pup eliminates is usually sufficient.

If the pup or dog does not eliminate, and you feel that he should need to, take him back inside after a few minutes and re-crate him. Do not give him freedom in the house until he has eliminated outside. Try the process every 10 minutes until you have success.

As the puppy ages, his ability to control his elimination increases. Adjust crate times using the hours rule, until he is housebroken completely. If you try leaving him out more often and he has accidents in the house, that means he was not ready to have so much freedom. Take a few steps back and re-crate for a while.

Weaning out of daily crate use should not happen until adolescence (7-11 months of age) or older, and when the dog has been accident-free and destruction-free for a minimum of three weeks. Start with one hour or so in one room. If the pup is successful, increase the time in that one room until she has proven that she is accident-free and destruction-free for up to eight hours.

Reduce the time again and try two rooms, slowly building the time up. Do not rush this process, and do not stop using the crate completely. A puppy isn’t mature until it is about one year old.

The crate weaning process is often easier begun during the night. Keep the dog in one room. No destruction or accidents the next morning? Continue for a few weeks before opening the rest of the house to him.

The goal is to create a dog who can be loose in the house most of the time, and will only need the crate sporadically (guest visits, travel, home repairs, fireworks). This is a process and every dog is different. Be patient.
**CRATE TRAINING YOUR NEW PUPPY OR DOG Q & A**

**Q** How long will I need to use the crate before I can allow my dog freedom in the house?

**A** Smart dog owners know that the crate is a lifelong tool. Canine professionals use crates even when dogs can be trusted alone. Besides helping dogs become housebroken, a crate is valuable throughout the dog’s life, because using the crate:

- Helps dogs be more obedient
- Keeps dogs from destroying furniture and kids’ toys
- Keeps dogs away from dangerous items
- Makes training easier
- Makes travel easier, or boarding, if you must leave the dog behind
- Gives dogs a sense of security, especially in new environments
- Helps dogs cope with household changes such as new babies, overnight guests, home improvements, and changes in routine

**Q** My dog doesn’t like the crate. He won’t go in it on his own, and when I put him in, he cries and whines. Can’t I just let him be loose?

**A** Dogs generally have no feelings about the crate itself. They whine or cry because they are being separated from you. But this separation is a necessity, so the sooner they get acclimated to these separations, the better.

Never release a dog from the crate if she is making noise or pawing to get out. Wait until she is quiet, then release quickly, leash her, and take her outside. Do not praise her for being quiet; release from the crate is rewarding enough.

Make the crate a great place to be by making sure good things happen in there. Toss random treats in for him to wander by and find. Make sure treats are in the crate when you put him in. Make a big rewarding fuss about him going in, and work on crating as a training exercise when you are home instead of just using it just when you are going out.

Puppies and new dogs in the home should be crated some even when you are home. This way, they learn to be calm when separated from you. If you only crate your dog when you leave, the crate will always mean something negative.

Make sure your dog always gets a chance to go outside after any significant crate time, and leave the door open when she is loose so she can investigate it. Praise her if she does. Most dogs learn to like, if not love, their “home,” and both of you will benefit from proper use of this effective, humane tool.

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**Please email us if you have any questions at training@atlantahumane.org. Happy training!**