



How to Use a Crate

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A crate can be a helpful tool to housebreak and manage your dog. It is just one element of successfully housing and training your dog and *does not* take the place of your time, effort and willingness. ***Intelligent management housebreaks your dog.***

Just stuffing a puppy in a crate and expecting her to become housebroken is erroneous and cruel. Your puppy is not a zoo animal but a curious, playful, young animal that needs an interesting and reactive environment. To use a crate wisely, follow these guidelines:

1. Isolation and confinement are different. Puppies should *not* be isolated from you. A puppy in the laundry room or bathroom at night is isolated from contact and cries and screams for help. These "distress" calls are used when young, frightened social animals need comfort. Puppies that cry at night are not stubborn or willful. They are justifiably scared and lonely. **DO NOT** put an isolated puppy in a crate. The pup will be confined as well as isolated and she'll be more terrified. Never punish an isolated pup. You won't solve the problem and are inflicting additional fear.
2. Dogs are instinctually "hardwired" for group contact twenty-four hours a day. Puppies crated and sleeping in the owner's bedroom are getting the right kind of social contact. They are confined, not isolated, and are spending seven to ten hours with you that they'd otherwise miss out on. (Something to consider if your pet is home alone all day.)
3. There is no magic inside a crate. Making a puppy live in the crate except for toilet times is foolish and cruel. Even veal calves get a better life than this. People housebreak puppies; crates do not.
4. Crate your puppy overnight with you in your room and up to three hours at a stretch during the day. Arrange for a neighbor, dog walker, or relative to come in and take her

out for long play breaks and toileting. Change your work schedule. Better yet, leave the pup in a safe yard, dog run, or fenced-off area of your yard.

5. Leave the dog in the gated-off kitchen, laundry room or den with the crate inside with the door *open*. The pup will rest and sleep in her "den", then leave it to relieve herself. (Dogs are not "denning" animals that stay in a den for ten hours at a time any more than you are a "bedding" animal.) Papers are a good temporary solution in some cases. You *can* find a suitable, safe area for your pup in the house or yard where she is safe and does not have to be trapped in a crate all day. Just look a little harder.

6. Do not leave a puppy or adult dog in a crate for the entire day as a regular routine. Some owners who work long hours imprison their dogs for *fifty* hours a week, or *two hundred* hours a month. Crates do not give the dog the contact with the environment, the ability to romp, play, investigate and explore, all of which are critical to proper mental and physical growth in a young dog.

7. Use a fiberglass crate. Buy one large enough for the puppy to lie down comfortably. Picture *yourself* in there for three hours and that will help get the right size.

8. Now it's time to introduce her to the crate. Take the top off. Put an old towel on the bottom and scrunch it up well. Hide delicious food treats in and under the folds and play a game of "find the goodies" with her many times a day. (Be a sport and let her win.) After two days, put the top on and do the same routine.

9. Train her to enter the crate on command. With the door open say "inside", toss a food treat in and let her come back out immediately. Praise her like mad when she enters and ignore her when she comes out. Reward the behavior you want. Do this for the length of a video or one Nature Program on the Discovery Channel.

10. With her bed or soft towel in the crate, now add a sterilized bone (or hollow rubber toy) newly stuffed with peanut butter, baby food or liverwurst. Tell her "inside" and shut the crate door for about three minutes. Praise like a crazy person as she bounds in. Sit or stand close by. Don't say a word to threaten her. *Just be there*. After three minutes, let her out *if she is quiet*. If you let a barking puppy out, you'll reward the barking. If you let a quiet puppy out, you'll reward the quiet behavior. Reward the behavior you want, remember? Ignore her when she bounces out and grab the bone (or toy). She only gets it inside the crate for now.

11. Repeat #10. Gradually lengthen the time she is in the crate. Praise when she goes in and ignore when she comes out. Be close to her.

12. Now, walk out of the room for three minutes. Return and let her out. Repeat this and make the time away from her longer and longer. Soon you'll be able to do housework,

study, exercise, attend to the baby, go to the bathroom and change clothes all by yourself!

13. Pay attention to what you are rewarding. If the puppy hollers, bangs on the crate or throws herself against the side and you rush to let her out, **BINGO!** You've rewarded exactly what you *don't* want. Wait until she's quiet before you let her out.

14. Some dogs never tolerate a crate. They drool heavily, pant and scrape at the crate door until their paws bleed. If this is your puppy and you feel that she is terrified instead of just restless, ***get the pup out of the crate and don't use it again!*** The dog is truly panicky and cannot be trained to use a crate. Using tranquilizers will not help this kind of dog; freedom from the crate will.

15. Put the pup in the crate when you are at home and cannot supervise her. If the kids need attention, work is calling or you're plain worn out and can't take another demand on yourself, put her in the crate. Better a crated puppy, than an angry owner with a short fuse.

16. Put the crate in your bedroom or a family member's room at night. Dogs must have close contact at night. They get better rest and truly feel an important part of your life when they sleep with you.

17. If you've taken the pup out to her toilet area and she fooled around in the grass, ate some leaves and raced after worms but didn't relieve herself, put her in the crate for ten minutes when you bring her inside. Take her outside to the toilet area again and she'll perform. A big hug or a food treat ***there*** (not once she's back inside the house) and freedom in the house are powerful rewards.

18. If you're watching TV, at your desk or reading on the couch and can't watch the pup, move the crate into the room with you. (Good luck, Newfoundland owners!) The pup will have contact, you'll be able to complete your tasks and your houseplants will be safe.

19. You do not need a crate to successfully housebreak a puppy. I have known and trained thousands of dogs who have never seen a crate in their lives and are fabulous pets. If you do use a crate, use it as a tool, not a baby-sitter.

20. Enroll your puppy in a *Companion Dogs by Sue Myles* Puppy Kindergarten Class now (seven weeks to seven months old). You'll learn effective, force-free techniques to train your pet at the most receptive time of her life. Enjoy puppyhood. . . get help!