

## **Crate Training**

Most dogs and puppies need to learn to adjust to being in a crate. As such, we need to systematically teach them to be comfortable in a crate. Once learned, crating can assist with house training and can also be used to ensure your puppy is safe when you are unable to supervise him. Remember that the crate should be just large enough for him to stand up, turn around and lie down comfortably. Some kennels come with petitions so your puppy can “grow” into the crate.

Early positive experiences with the crate is vitally important to create a lasting impression. Feed all your puppy’s meals in his crate, always with the door open. All new toys can be introduced in the crate. Make the crate comfortable and place it in a high traffic area like the kitchen or a place your puppy likes to rest. Start with the door wide open and toss some yummy treats inside. Praise your puppy when he is inside eating the treats. Gradually introduce hiding treats in the bedding and place treats in the back of the crate. Never force your puppy in the crate! After a few days of this, start by closing the door part way but don’t lock the door. Each time your puppy enters the crate, label the behavior by saying, “kennel.” When your canine companion appears comfortable going in with the door partially closed you are ready to try the first lock-in. Close the door after he has gone in and feed him treats through the crate for a minute before opening the door. Do this several times. Then practice walking around the crate and around the room while he is locked inside, pitching treats at him occasionally and then, after a couple of minutes, opening the door and letting him out. Make the whole thing a positive experience for him. The next step is to add some duration to the lock in.

When you have time at home to monitor your canine companion, get an extra special chew toy or a frozen, stuffed Kong and ask your canine companion to enter the crate by stating the cue “kennel”. Close the door. Never leave a puppy or dog unsupervised with something in their kennel that they may not be safe to have! Leave the room and then immediately return. His first experience being locked in the crate for any length of time must be an easy and positive one. Gradually increase the duration. If your puppy appears anxious go back to previous steps. All good things should happen while he's in the crate. Tire your puppy out with vigorous exercise and training before the longest absences. Don't forget to give you puppy potty breaks as appropriate! It is important to gradually condition the puppy to being in the crate this way before using it in your everyday life.