

KEN PICCIUTO'S

School For Dogs



A Dog Owner's Guide to Crate Training

A Message to the Dog Owner:

Countless dogs end up in animal shelters because of housebreaking and destructive problems, only to be euthanized at the end of their allotted stay.

Far too many potentially good pets are misunderstood, unfairly punished, or isolated by well-meaning owners who are unable to prevent or control common behavior problems of puppies and young adult dogs.

We want to prevent the anguish of these episodes and help as many dogs and dog owners as possible. The correct use of a crate could give many of these innocent animals a chance to live happy and healthy lives.

Since every dog deserves a chance, please read this information carefully and give crates some serious thought. It has been my experience as a dog trainer for over 35 years that crates have helped to make many dogs trustworthy companions.

What Is a Dog Crate?

A dog crate is a rectangular enclosure with a top and a door, constructed of wire or molded plastic. Its purpose is to provide guaranteed confinement for reasons of security, safety, housebreaking, protection of household items, or simply general control. Crates are available in a variety of sizes proportioned to fit any dog.

The crate has long been accepted and trusted by obedience trainers, breeders, groomers, veterinarians, and others who handle dogs regularly. Unfortunately, many owners reject the idea of using a crate because they consider confinement unfair to the dog. "Its like jail." "I'd never put my dog in a cage like that." "It's cruel."

As a reasoning human being, you value your freedom. It is only natural to feel that closing your dog in a crate would be cruel and inhumane. However, *you are not a dog!*

In reality, dogs are den animals. On their own, they will often retreat to a small area under a table or a corner, and are actually much happier and more secure in their own private, special place. Dogs are neither frustrated nor afraid when they are closed in. To you it may be a "cage" ...to your dog, it's a "home."

Isn't it better to prevent your dog from causing trouble than to correct him for it later?

What Size Should a Crate Be?

A crate should be large enough to allow your dog to stand up, turn around, and lay back down comfortably. When purchasing a crate for a puppy, it would be wise to buy a large crate with a divider so that the same crate will contain him when he is an adult.

Where Should I Put It?

Since one of the main reasons for using a crate is to confine the dog without making him feel isolated or banished, it should be placed in a “people” area such as a kitchen or family room. You may want to move the crate into your bedroom at night.

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How to Use a Crate

1. To start with, put treats, meals, water and toys in the crate. Leave the door open so your pup can go in and out on his own. In this way, your dog will begin to associate the crate with pleasant experiences. *Do not use the crate as punishment.*
2. Next, put your pup in his crate for a few minutes with the door closed. If he misbehaves, discipline him with a loud noise. Keep the door closed for 10 minutes (if he is quite), then let him out. Wait an hour, and try it again, this time for 30 minutes. Repeat this procedure for a few days. [If your dog seems happy, he has been successfully conditioned to be left alone.]
3. *Never pay attention to your dog nor let him out of his crate if he is barking, whining or howling.* If he misbehaves in any way, make a loud noise; when he has been quiet for 10 seconds, then you can let him out. In this way he will learn that he cannot get out by making a fuss, and that you will reward quiet behavior with attention.
4. After your dog is house trained, he can be left in his crate with water and a chew toy. A blanket to lie on is optional, however, since it has been my experience that it is usually chewed, I don't recommend it.

Use But Don't Abuse!

1. The crate is a useful tool and should never be used as punishment.
2. Your dog must be well exercised both before and after crating.
3. To have a well adjusted pet, you will need to give him lots of positive, personal attention when you are at home. Any dog that is constantly denied the human companionship that he needs and craves is going to be a lonely pet, and will doubtless find negative ways in which to express his anxiety and depression.

Where Can I Get a Crate?

New crates can be purchased in pet shops, at dog shows or from your veterinarian. The price depends on size, quality and make. (Even the most expensive crate doesn't compare to the cost of replacing or repairing a sofa, chair, woodwork or carpeting.)

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P.O. Box 178
Milford, Connecticut 06460
(203) 877-8383
info@ctcanines.com • www.ctcanines.com

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