

Dog: Crate Training Your Puppy



A crate is a terrific investment for a number of reasons. A crate can help you with:

House-training: Teaches your puppy to keep the home clean.

Chew training: Stops your puppy from chewing anything except legitimate chew toys.

Settling: Encourages your puppy to settle down when he's alone.

Kenneling: Your puppy may need to stay in a crate during travel or a hospital visit.

Get a crate large enough for your puppy to stand up, lie down, and turn around in—but no larger. Otherwise, he might be tempted to use one end as a bathroom and the other as a bed.

Before you start using the crate, give your puppy a chance to get used to it. Don't just throw him in there and hope he adjusts; that would be traumatic. The crate needs to be a comfy, safe place your puppy loves to spend time in. Here's how to get him used to it:

PHASE 1: THE FIRST DAY

1. Throw tiny, yummy treats into the crate. When your puppy goes in to get them, praise him.
2. When your puppy is happily venturing into the crate, begin practicing closing the door for a few seconds while treating him through the opening. Then let him right back out. Repeat the exercise many times, building up to 10 seconds.

PHASE 2: THE NEXT FEW DAYS

1. Repeat exercise two from above. Then stuff a puppy KONG® with extra-special goodies. Put the KONG in the crate and close the door behind your puppy as he goes to eat it. Go about your business in the house, then let your puppy back out after five minutes. Do this without any fanfare whatsoever.
2. Repeat the exercise several times in the next couple of days using a yummy chew bone. Vary the absences from one to 20 minutes. Ignore your puppy if he whines or barks; always wait to let him out until he has been quiet for at least a few seconds.

PHASE 3: LEAVING THE HOUSE

1. Leave your puppy in the crate with something gourmet in his KONG, and then leave the house for brief errands such as collecting your mail or watering the garden.
2. Over the next few sessions, gradually extend the duration of your absences. Go from one minute to five minutes to 10, 15, or 30 minutes, depending on your puppy's age (see below). Don't just build your absences upward, though; also throw in some shorter ones.

A time guide to crating puppies:

8–10 weeks	up to one hour
11–12 weeks	up to two hours
13–16 weeks	up to three hours
Over four months	up to four hours

Tip

- Never leave dogs at any age in the crate longer than three to four hours at a time, except for bedtime.