

Crate Training Your Puppy

The key to house training is to establish a routine that increases the chances that your puppy will eliminate in the right place in your presence so that he can be praised and rewarded; and decrease the chances that your puppy will eliminate in the wrong place so that he will not develop bad habits. The single most important aspect of puppy training is that you reward and praise your puppy every time he does the right thing. Example: praise him when he chews his own toy instead of the couch or eliminates outside instead of in the house. The more time you spend with your puppy, the quicker and easier it will be to train him.

This is where crate training can be an efficient and effective way to house train a puppy. Puppies do not like to soil their resting/sleeping quarters if given adequate opportunity to eliminate elsewhere. However, there is still a far more important aspect of crate training. If your puppy does not eliminate while he is confined, then he will need to eliminate when he is released, i.e., he eliminates when you are present to reward and praise him.

Be sure to understand the difference between temporarily confining your puppy to a crate and long-term confinement when you are not at home. The major purpose of confinement when you are not home is to restrict mistakes to a small, protected area. The purpose of crate training is quite the opposite. Short-term confinement to a crate is intended to inhibit your puppy from eliminating when confined, so that he will want to eliminate when released from confinement and taken to an appropriate area. Crate training also helps teach your puppy to have bladder and bowel control. Instead of going whenever he feels like it, he learns to hold it and go at convenient schedules times. There is a general rule that for every month of life, the bladder control is equal to an hour. For example, if your puppy is 4 months old, he should be able to have 4 hours of bladder control.

Crate training should not be abused either, otherwise the problem will get drastically worse. The crate is not intended as a place to lock the puppy up and forget him for extended periods. If your puppy soils his crate because you left him there too long, the house training process will be set back several weeks, if not months.

Your puppy should only be confined to a crate when you are at home. Except at night, give your puppy an opportunity to relieve himself every hour for the first 3 months of life. Each time you let him out, put him on a leash and immediately take him outside. Once outside, give him about three to five minutes to produce. If he does not eliminate within the allotted time period, simply return him to his crate. If he does perform, then immediately reward him with praise, food, treats, affection, play, an extended walk, or permission to run and play in your house for a couple of hours. For young pups, after 45 minutes to an hour take him to his toilet area again. Never give your puppy free run of your home unless you know without a doubt that his bowels and bladder are empty.

During this crate training procedure, if you keep him on a regular feeding schedule, he should soon adopt a corresponding elimination schedule. Once you know what time of day he usually needs to eliminate, you can begin taking him out only at those times instead of every hour. After he has eliminated, he can have free, but supervised, run of your house. About one hour before he needs to eliminate (as calculated) put him in his crate. This will prevent him from going earlier than you had planned. With your consistency and abundance of rewards and praise for eliminating outside, he will become more reliable about holding it until you take him out. Then the amount of time you confine him before his scheduled outing can be reduced and eliminated.

If you ever find an accident in the house, just clean it up. Do not punish your puppy. All this means is that you have given him unsupervised access to your house too soon. Until he can be trusted, don't leave him unsupervised with free run of your house. If mistakes and accidents occur, it is best to go back to the crate training. You need to more accurately predict when your puppy needs to eliminate and he needs more time to develop bladder and bowel control. For more information, you may consider the following two books:

Crate Training Your Dog
By Pat Storer, \$3.95

Crate-Den Training: A Safe and Private Space For Your Dog, by September Morn, \$3.75