



# Crate Training

It's crucial to introduce a crate correctly. If a positive association is created right from the start it will ensure that the crate can be used in a variety of situations:

- \* It can be used to keep the puppy (and house) safe when unable to be supervised
- \* It can be used to help with toilet training
- \* It can be used as a 'safe place' to give the puppy a break from small children and vice versa.
- \* It can be used in a car to keep the puppy safe
- \* If your dog ever needs to stay at the vets, they will be in a crate

During the day, you should put the crate in the main area of the house to get them used to household sights and noises. At night it can be placed initially in the bedroom to ensure the puppy feels secure and will help with toilet training (see toilet training fact sheet).

A lot of puppies like the crate to be covered to make it more like a den environment. The crate should be large enough for the puppy to stand up and lie down flat comfortably. It should not be too large because this will not help toilet training. You don't want to give your puppy a bed area with an en-suite! If you have a large breed dog then you will have to purchase several crates if you want to continue to use them into adulthood, or you buy a larger one and section it off as your puppy grows.

## **How to introduce a crate:**

The crate should always be a place where good things happen. It should never be used as a punishment i.e. 'go to your bed' for doing something wrong. It should never be over used and abused. Puppies should not be crated longer than 2 to 3 hours at a time during the day.

A crate should be introduced slowly. It should be made into a fun game to start with and training sessions should be kept short. This will ensure a positive association is created.

1. When you first erect the crate, secure the door open to ensure it does not get knocked and scare the puppy. Scatter some treats around the crate and just a few inside the door. Allow the pup to investigate at his own pace. Do not force the puppy at any point or shut the door. Just sit nearby and praise him for being near/in the crate. Do this over several sessions. Only move onto the next step when your puppy is comfortable and confident around the crate. Bold puppies may show no fear at all so you can move quickly onto the next step.
2. Gradually start putting the treats further into the crate. Encourage him all the way in. Again, do not force this. As the puppy gains in confidence, keep repeating over several sessions.
3. Once the puppy is happily entering the crate fully, start hand feeding him whilst he is inside and encourage him to remain in there for a short period. At first give several treats rapidly in a row. Allow the puppy to exit if he wishes, but do not give any treats if outside the crate. Repeat over several sessions.

4. At any point that the puppy enters the crate of his own accord, you can reward with a treat (of click and reward if you are clicker training.) Reward with several treats to encourage him to remain in the crate.
5. Next, try closing the door once the puppy has entered and then feed more treats through the door in rapid succession for a short period. Then open the door to let him out. Stop feeding once outside the crate. If the puppy chooses to go back in, start feeding again with the door closed for a short period of time, open door, and stop feeding = good things happen when inside crate with the door shut.
6. If you want to add a command then this is the point to do that. As the puppy is entering the crate, say your command (whatever word you want to use e.g. in your bed.) Then reward (or click and reward).
7. Gradually increase the amount of time the puppy remains in the crate with the door closed. You should vary the amount of time so that sometimes it is a short duration and sometimes longer. As this stage you are still feeding treats and remaining by the crate.
8. The next step is to try getting the puppy comfortable whilst you move away from the crate. Once the puppy has entered the crate and is happy with you feeding treats through the door, try taking 1 step away, and immediately return and feed. Gradually build up how many steps you take before returning and treating. Do not rush this process. At any point that the puppy seems distressed, go back to taking less steps or even remaining by the crate for a few sessions before trying again.

The aim is to get your puppy happily entering and remaining in the crate with the door closed for gradually longer and longer periods of time. The whole process can take a bit of time with some puppies especially if they have had a bad experience in a crate at some point. If the puppy seems distressed at any of the steps above, just go back a stage and wait until the puppy seems happy again before moving on.

Once the puppy has been happily introduced to the crate, you can start getting them used to being in the crate alone whilst they are occupied with their dinner, a tasty stuffed kong or interactive toy. If the puppy stops what he is doing and looks for you, go back and just reassure him by opening the door and stroking for a few seconds. Then close the door and repeat. Continue until the puppy is fully absorbed in the toy/food or settles to sleep. Once fully distracted, try leaving the room briefly. Keep going in and out the room until the puppy takes little notice of your comings and goings. Gradually increase and vary the amount of time you are out of the room.

Increasing the amount of time your puppy is left alone in the crate should be done over several sessions. The aim is to ensure your puppy does not get distressed and begins to understand that you do come back!

If you have any questions about crate training please do not hesitate to contact me on 07919 157201 or email [info@paws4teaching.co.uk](mailto:info@paws4teaching.co.uk)