



Why Use A Crate?

Many people think of a dog crate as inhumane. They would never think of putting their pet in a cage.

If a dog crate is considered a cage, then you must also consider what you put infant children to bed in, or the playpen used during their waking time as cages. Of course, baby beds and playpens are used world over to help keep children safe when their caretaker cannot be with them. A dog crate is nothing less.

If left to his own design, a dog will seek out a small, quiet, dry place to sleep, a shelter where he can feel safe and secure. In the wild this is called a den. A crate can simulate the same environment for your pet in your home. Using a bungee cord to hold the door open when your pet does not need to be confined will allow free access to his den and you might be surprised how often it gets used.

Besides being a safe haven, crates also come in handy when:

- 1] You decide to paint the living room and don't think you need canine help.**
- 2] The repairman has come to fix your sink and he too doesn't require an assistant.**
- 3] When company comes to your home.**

Visitors, not accustom to having pets, may leave enticing articles edible and inedible within reach of your curious canine. Doors to the outside are not as easily monitored. Small sized visitors may not have yet been taught the proper way to interact with animals. There is even the possibility that too much excitement might overly stress your usually calm pet.

A time for crate use, which may not have been considered is if your dog is ever in need of surgery or sustains an injury which requires bed rest. You might be instructed to not let your pet run or jump. This is when a crate becomes a hospital bed.

Transporting your pet to and from home in a crate assures the safest protection from injury, causes less distraction to the driver and prevents the chance of escaping when the car door is opened.

Crate training should begin as soon as your new pet comes home, though it's never too late to start. Whether a puppy or an adult, crate training is accomplished in the same manner.

Crate/Den Training

Hard plastic air crates are the most commonly used indoor dog dens. Wire crates are also good, but it would be wise to cover the wire crate with a blanket to make it dark and relaxing. Air crates can be used with the side air vents toward the top for extra warmth or with the vents at the bottom to allow more air circulation in warm weather. Using a bungee cord to hold the door open when your pet does not need to be confined, will allow free access to his den and you might be surprised how often it gets used.

When buying a crate, buy one that will fit your dog at his adult size. The crate should be big enough for a grown dog to stand up in, turn around and lie down. If your new four-legged family member is still a baby and the crate is for an adult, 60 pound dog, the crate is going to seem like a mansion w/bathroom facilities. There is going to be enough room for sleeping and peeing! Not good! Effective house training requires that your pet's den have only enough room for comfortable sleeping, thus eliminating the possibility of accidents happening. Animals do not like to foul their sleeping area. The answer to this size problem is to block off the back of the crate so that the too large area reverts to just enough room to sleep. A large cardboard box or a large stuffed animal would take up unnecessary space in the back of the crate. Goodwill and Salvation Army stores are inexpensive ways to purchase stuffed animals.

Place the crate somewhere it's quiet and out of the traffic flow such as a bedroom or utility room. It is less stressful. If this is not possible, then an out of the way area in a kitchen or living room will suffice. In this case, covering the crate completely with a lightweight sheet or blanket is recommended to restrict your pet's view when needed.

In the crate, place bedding that can be fluffed up and rearranged to your new pet's own suiting. The first night or two, a small article of your clothing with your scent on it, will make the crate feel more homey. Do not use anything too small or with buttons or plastic parts that could be eaten. A t-shirt or pair of shorts is a good clothing item.

This is your pet's bedroom only. Never put food and water bowls inside the crate during crate training. Access to water may cause a full bladder with nowhere to go. Spilled water could make for damp bedding. Food might attract insects.

How you emotionally react to your use of a crate will effect how your pet feels about being crated. He will initially be unhappy when being crated and will be very excited when he sees you've come to let him out. Separation anxiety will be lessened if you treat crating and releasing from the crate with minimal emotion. He will always want to be by your side, but eventually he will accept confinement as a normal part of his regular daily routine. If possible, begin crate training as soon as your new pet comes home. Give him time to check out his new surroundings. Take him out to make sure he is less likely to eliminate in his new den. Then, place him in his crate for a small nap where he can still see you. Find something to do within his view, but ignore him. Fifteen to twenty minutes should be enough time for the new family member to whimper and whine and then, upon his release, realize you aren't sentencing him to a life in prison. Take him directly outside to aid in his house breaking. Carry him if he is young. Repeat the crate training several more times during the day.

The first overnight crating will be different for a puppy, compared to a new adult pet. We know a healthy adult should be able to control his bladder for 8 hours. Young puppies should be capable, but not always. The best way to help your pet control his potty needs is to pick up his water bowl an hour before bedtime and make sure he goes out to potty right before being crated.

During the night, your pet might wake up a number of times. There might be some whimpering going on. Ignore him if you can. If that isn't going to work for you, just letting him know that you are near should be enough. If it has been several hours of sleep for a puppy, you might consider taking him out to potty. You don't know what his routine was before you brought him home. After a day or two, you will know if he really needs to go out or if he is capable of waiting till morning.

Crate training requires time and effort to be done right, but in the end it is well worth it.