

CRATE TRAINING

A crate offers a safe retreat for your dog whenever they want to be left alone. It is also a valuable management tool, for example during puppy training. Before using it though, you must condition your dog to love their crate.

Crate training helps with

- House training
Prompts the dog to hold on when unsupervised and thus expedites house training.
- Chew training
Prevents the dog from chewing furniture, clothes and anything else except chew toys and thus creates good habits.
- Settling
Forms a habit to relax and be inactive when alone.
Also, a place where the dog can retreat to, for example when they are overwhelmed by visitors or other activities.
- Hospital stay or travel
The dog will be less stressed when confined if they have been crate trained.

The first few days

Place the crate in a high traffic area such as the kitchen. The first impression is very important, so place comfortable bedding and a few tasty treats inside before your puppy sees it. Keep putting treats inside when the dog isn't looking and let the dog discover the treats by themselves. Feed meals in the crate. Tie a chew toy or stuffed food puzzle toy to the back of the crate.

Always leave the door open!

CONTACT

Sylvie Martin
Dog Trainer & Behaviour Consultant
0425 713 227
sylvie@crosspaws.com.au
crosspaws.com.au

Adding a cue

After a few days add a cue, e.g. 'in the crate'. Say the cue first, then toss a few treats in the crate. Praise when the dog goes in and eats the treats. After several repetitions of this wait for the dog to go into the crate before you toss the treats in. Never repeat the cue! If the dog doesn't go in, try again a little later.

Closing the door briefly

Once the dog is going in and out on cue, you are ready for the first lock in. Play the in/out game, only now close the door after they have gone in and feed them treats through the grate or an opening for a minute or two. Then open the door again. After several repetitions, practise walking around the crate and around the room while they are locked inside, pitching treats at them occasionally. After a few minutes, open the door again. Make it fun for the dog.

Practise duration

The next step is to add more duration. For example, crate your dog while you work, have dinner or watch a movie. Stuff a couple of food puzzle toys with something tasty. Set the crate up right next to where you are and cue the dog in the crate. After they have gone

in, give the dog the food toys, close the door and go about your business. Leave a few times but only for a minute or so. Do not stay away longer! The first experience being locked in the crate for this length must be an overwhelmingly good one.

Leaving the dog alone

The next step is leaving the house. The first time you do this, leave for just a minute and come straight back. Then do five minutes, then fifteen, thirty, an hour etc. Mix up short absences with longer absences so the dog never knows when you'll be back.

Never leave your dog in a crate for more than 4 hours and only if your dog is old enough and healthy enough to hold on for that long. Depart and arrive without any fanfare. Tire the dog out with exercise and training before the longest absences. And, of course, don't forget to give your dog food puzzle toys when in the crate.

Crate soiling

Remove the bedding for a week (porous material can trigger elimination). Keep both dog and crate scrupulously clean. Take the dog out more often so they are not forced to eliminate in the crate. Also check with your vet for a bladder infection or incontinence.

