

GUIDE TO CRATE/CONFINEMENT TRAINING

Benefits of a crate/confinement trained dog

1. Security – a specific area that serves as a den or resting area for the dog.
2. Safety for the pet.
3. Prevents damage (chewing, investigation, elimination, etc.).
4. Aids in the training of proper chewing and elimination by preventing failure and encouraging success.
5. Traveling – accustoms the dog to confinement for traveling and boarding.
6. Improved relationship with your pet: fewer problems and therefore less discipline for the pet and less frustration/anxiety for you.

The location and techniques used for training should be designed to keep the experience positive. For example, the dog should be encouraged to sleep, nap, or play with its chew toys in its confinement area. On the other hand, if the dog is confined at a time when it is in need of play, attention, or elimination, then escape attempts and anxiety are to be expected. If a dog's attempts at escape are ever successful, then future, more ambitious attempts to escape are likely to occur. Therefore a secure, inescapable form of confinement should be utilized.

Crate/Kennel Training

1. A metal, collapsible crate with a tray floor or a plastic traveling crate works well, provided it is large enough for the dog/puppy to stand and turn around. They have escape proof kennels available or reinforcing them at the corners and top/bottom door with something. Some dogs adapt quicker to a small room, run, or doggy playpen.
2. Because dogs/puppies are social animals, an ideal location for the crate is a room that the family frequents such as a kitchen, den, or bedroom, rather than an isolated laundry or furnace room.
3. For the crate to remain a positive retreat, it should not be used for punishment. If social isolation (time-out) is used, consider placing the dog/puppy in a laundry room or bathroom. (You can use the crate/kennel if you use a happy tone of voice)
4. A radio or television may help to calm the dog/puppy and may help to mask environmental noises that can trigger barking.

Training Exercises

1. Introduce the dog/puppy to the crate/kennel as early in the day as possible. Place a few treats, toys, or food in the crate/kennel so the dog/puppy is motivated to enter voluntarily (be sure to leave door open). Command training words (e.g. 'Go to your kennel' or just 'kennel' must be consistent) can also be useful.
2. The first confinement session should be after a period of play, exercise, and elimination (i.e. when the animal is ready to take a nap. Place the dog/puppy in its crate/kennel then place a toy and/or treat and close the door and say the command word.
3. Leave the room but remain close enough to hear the dog/puppy. Some degree of distress vocalization is to be expected the first few times the dog/puppy is separated from its family members. NEVER REWARD THE PET BY LETTING IT OUT WHEN IT CRIES OR WHINES. Ignore it until the crying stops. When you return stand in front of the crate/kennel and avoid eye contact with pet and wait until the pet is calm to let them out (this may seem like forever but normally it is less than a minute).

4. Repeat the confinement training procedures a few more times before bedtime.
5. Prior to bedtime, the dog/puppy should be exercised and secured in its crate for the night. You can feed early evening and pick up the water 1 or 2 hour prior to bedtime. AGAIN, do not go to the pet if it is crying. If the pet cries in the middle of the night it should be ignored. Puppies under 4 months of age may not be able to keep their crate clean for the entire night, so an early morning walk may be necessary for the first few weeks. Sometimes the best way to reduce distress vocalization is to locate the crate in the bedroom.

If your pet is anxious or attempts to escape when left in its crate, then he/she may not have been accustomed to its crate in a gradual and positive enough manner. Review the steps above to ensure that the crate is in a comfortable bedding location, that each crate introduction is positive, and that the crate is not used for punishment or negative tones.