

# How to use a crate properly

Start your puppy in it as soon as possible, the younger the better (if possible pick your new puppy up in the crate and take him home in it). Set it up in a corner where you plan to keep him. Put a blanket, old rug or soft towel in the crate until he is out of the chewing stage. Further security or warmth in winter is achieved by placing a blanket or sheet over the top and sides of the crate creating a real den, especially at night. Put toys and feed the puppy in the crate so that he only has pleasant associations with it. Never punish him with the crate or force him into it, coax him into it with a toy or biscuit - if he flops down to sleep elsewhere, just gently pick him up, place him inside and shut the door until he is awake again, he will be too sleepy to care and will be getting the proper association. Soon he will seek the crate automatically when he is tired.

Use these frequent periods to advantage and don't hesitate to confine him to the crate several times a day for short periods of time, especially when you are too busy to watch him. This is important until he is housebroken and also for his own safety. Puppies like and need to chew, but chewing the cord of a lighted lamp can result in immediate and painful death - in his own crate with a chew toy is best.

Always confine him in the crate when you are out of the house! He may howl in resentment at first, not because of the crate, but because you are leaving him behind and he knows it. Leave him a bowl of fresh water that he can't spill and give him a rawhide bone or similar safe chew. Don't worry and don't weaken, he will settle down as soon as you are gone.

Learning this type of discipline is a vital part of his young life. The puppy's brain is fully developed by the time it reaches seven weeks of age and he is going to learn with or without your help so it may as well learn what you want, rather than learning on his own and picking up bad habits in the process.

Always remember to remove any collar when crating him as it can become caught in the mesh and badly frighten or injure your dog. Confine your puppy to his crate all night and solve the housebreaking problem very quickly. One of the greatest advantages of the dog crate is that the dog won't soil it unless he is desperate because it is his home. When you take him out of the crate carry him straight outside to the same place so he can go to the toilet - also after eating or if he's been asleep anywhere else as these are the main times he needs to go.

After a while you can leave the door open to the crate - but confine him to the room at night (paper on the floor will help with any accidents).

The dog crate, intelligently and properly used can indeed spell real happiness for both dog and owner. The crate should last the dog's lifetime and so worthwhile, the cost is soon forgotten... a real bargain considering its many advantages.