

## **Dog Crate Buying Guide**

Crate training is one of the best possible things that you can do for your puppy. Not only will the puppy be easier to housetrain but overall you will have a happier, more secure dog that has his or her own place to sleep and stay both when you are home and when you are away. Crate training is also an asset when you plan to travel with your dog or puppy. Crate training keeps the animal calm on airplanes and also keeps you pet safe when driving. Crates can be attached to seats by seatbelts and harnesses similar to how children's car seats are fastened into the car. Just like car seats they prevent injury to the dog in the case of a sudden stop or an accident.

Crate training does not happen overnight, and does require both work and attention by the owner. Crate training should never be used as a punishment for a mistake or a bad behavior, or the dog or puppy will see the crate as a bad place and this will defeat the whole purpose of the training. To start the crate training in the most positive way start very slowly and only progress at the rate the puppy is comfortable with.

### **Picking The Right Size Crate**

Depending on how large your puppy will get it will usually make sense to buy the size that will fit the full sized dog rather than having to buy multiple crates as your puppy grows. It is important, however, if the puppy is small and the crate is larger that you limit the space in the crate for the small puppy or he or she will simply use one end for the bathroom and one end as the "den". To make a large crate smaller a mesh screen or piece of wood can be used and then slide to give more room as the puppy matures. When necessary it can be completely removed to give the older dog full use of the crate area.

The idea size of crate, or crate area, is about the length of the dog when it is down, paws extended. Most crates come in standard widths that will allow small dogs to really stretch out but may require larger dogs to sleep in a coiled position. Dogs should be able to stand up comfortably in the crate without the top of the crate pressing on their head or shoulders.

Giant or very large breeds of dogs will generally outgrow most commercial crates before they completely mature. Some specially made crates for large breeds are available on the internet and through breed associations or even pet stores.

### **Getting Started**

Getting started means just familiarizing the puppy with the crate. Make sure the crate is the correct size and that there is comfortable bedding in the crate. Start by sitting with the puppy in front of the open

crate. Place a treat, with the puppy seeing the placement, into the very front of the crate. When the puppy reaches in to get the treat say "Crate" and the puppy's name, just once. Allow the puppy to take the treat out of the crate, and do not close the door. Do not try to keep the puppy in the crate longer and make no comment when the puppy exits the crate. Next time repeat the process putting the treat in far enough the puppy must step in completely. Again, when approaching the crate say "Crate" and the puppy's name, and then say "Good Dog" and the puppy's name when they are in the crate. Allow them to exit when they want and ignore the exiting behavior.

Gradually feed a few treats through the side of the crate to encourage the puppy to stay. Always allow him or her to exit when they want, but only praise the going in behavior, never the coming out!

Within a few days the puppy will be comfortable in the crate for a few minutes. Try closing the door but only for a minute at a time, staying right beside the crate. With the puppy's comfort level leave the crate door closed for longer periods and begin to move away for a few seconds, gradually lengthening the time.

Never return and open the crate when the puppy starts to whine or bark, as this will encourage this behavior. Wait until the puppy is quiet before taking him or her out of the crate. Never leave a puppy in the crate for more than 2 to 4 hours at a time, especially when they are small and are not yet housetrained.