

# Crate Training

Having a safe place for your dog to go is a great idea. And a crate is often just the place. To be sure that your dog agrees with you about the crate being a great place, you will want to introduce the crate slowly and carefully.

**WARNING!!!** Before you put your dog in the crate, be sure that his/her collar or harness is off. You don't want your dog to get caught on anything in the crate.

Until your dog is used to the crate, you don't want to put anything in the crate with the dog which might harm the dog. Avoid bedding or newspaper that the dog might chew and ingest. Avoid anything that could be chewed into small pieces and choked on.

## **When to Crate Train**

- 🐾 Crate training is going to be easiest with a tired dog and in a quiet environment.
- 🐾 As you go through the crate training, you will be giving the dog treats and a stuffed bone/Kong as a reward for being in the crate. When the crate door is open, be sure to take away the stuffed bone/Kong. Be sure that the treats are high enough value to keep your dog interested!

## **Introduce the Crate**

- 🐾 Set up the empty crate in an area of the house that is away from loud or scary noises, but in a place where the dog feels part of the family "pack."
- 🐾 Secure the door of the crate so that it is open and can not accidentally hit the dog as he/she goes in and out of the crate.
- 🐾 Begin by leaving small treats or toys in the open crate. Allow the dog to find the treats/toys on his/her own. You want your dog to start thinking that the crate is a pretty cool place to be!
- 🐾 You may want to feed your dog in the crate with the door open.
- 🐾 If your dog goes in the crate voluntarily to nap or just rest, you have achieved step one in successful crate training.

## **Teaching the "Kennel Up" Command**

- 🐾 When your dog is comfortable going in and out of the crate on his/her own, you might want to teach the dog to go into the crate on command.
- 🐾 Be ready with 10 to 20 small treats -  $\frac{1}{4}$ " cube size. Stand by the crate and throw the treat in the crate. Be sure the dog sees you throw the treat in the crate! As your dog gets the idea, throw the treat farther back in the crate.
- 🐾 As the dog enters the crate, say, "Kennel up!" in a light happy voice! After the dog retrieves the treat, he/she will turn around and look at you. Tell the dog that he/she is a good dog and give him/her another treat in the kennel. Walk away and leave the dog in the crate with the door open!
- 🐾 When the dog comes out of the crate, repeat the two steps above! Repeat this process until the dog starts anticipating the "Kennel up" command and enters the crate when you say the command.
- 🐾 **Avoid talking to your dog in his/her crate.** You want the dog to be happy in the crate without any attention from you.

## **Closing the Kennel Door**

- 🐾 **IMPORTANT!!** It is important that when you open the door to the crate, do not talk to the dog or play with the dog. Some trainers ask their dogs to sit in the crate before the door is opened.

Remember, the dog behavior we want in the crate is quiet and calm. That type of behavior is best achieved with quiet, calm owner behavior!

### Phase 1

- 🐾 The first time you close the kennel door, the dog should be in the crate with something wonderful to do such as chewing on a stuffed bone or stuffed Kong.
- 🐾 Put a stuffed bone or Kong in the kennel. Tell your dog to "Kennel up" and let him/her find the stuffed bone/Kong and start to enjoy it.
- 🐾 Shut the kennel door for a second or two and open it again. Remove the stuffed bone/Kong from your dog!
- 🐾 Repeat the above process and gradually build the amount of time you can hold the door shut.
- 🐾 Remember: remove the stuffed bone/Kong every time the door is opened!
- 🐾 **IMPORTANT!!** The goal is to have your dog to be happy in the crate, not scared or panicked! Shut the door slowly. Avoid banging it closed. Start by having the dog in the closed crate for a second or two and add time **slowly!** If your dog becomes at all apprehensive, back up in your training and progress more slowly.

### Phase 2

- 🐾 After you can **hold** the door closed for 30 seconds to a minute, you want to actually close the door. At the beginning of this phase, close the door for only a second or so and stand where your dog can see you.
- 🐾 You will know that you can increase the time that the door is closed if your dog remains interested in his/her stuffed bone/Kong when the door is closed. If the dog loses interest in the stuffed bone/Kong, shorten the time.
- 🐾 Build time slowly with your dog and stay where he/she can see you.
- 🐾 Remember: remove the stuffed bone/Kong every time the door is open.

### Phase 3

- 🐾 As your dog can stay in the kennel with the door closed and you close by for a longer and longer period of time, you can start to move away from the crate.
- 🐾 Again, build the time that you are away from the crate slowly.
- 🐾 If your dog finishes his/her stuffed bone/Kong and begins to whine or bark for your attention, ignore the behavior. That means no eye contact to the dog, no talking to the dog (which you weren't doing anyway!), and no going up to the cage! Ignore the behavior, and it should stop quickly.
- 🐾 If your dog seems to be panicked, back up your training! At all costs, avoid having a dog that is scared or panicked.

### Increasing Time Away from Your Dog in the Crate

- 🐾 By now your dog should be working his/her way up to an hour or more of quiet time in the crate with the door shut and you in sight.
- 🐾 It is time to be out of sight of your dog. Leave the room for a minute or two to begin with. Gradually build time away from your dog.
- 🐾 Eventually, you can leave the house with the knowledge that your dog is safely in his/her crate and will be comfortably resting until you return.

Do not use your dog's crate for punishment. The crate should be a refuge, a fun place to go and relax for your dog! Be sure that you keep it that way!