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Crate Training ABC's

By Diane Blackman, CPDT-KA

Crate training is the most effective way of housetraining your puppy. Remember, however, that a puppy's bladder is not big and still need to be let outside every few hours. If you use a crate while you are away at work, either come home or have a friend or neighbor come by and let the puppy out to relieve themselves.

1. Purchase a crate that is big enough for the puppy, when full-sized, can walk in, turn around and lay down. If you have a large breed puppy, you can purchase the size they will need as an adult and install a divider so they have only the amount they need and slowly move the divider until it is no longer required any more.
2. Introduce your puppy to the crate. Make sure you place a bone or safe toy to entertain the puppy. If you cannot get the puppy to enter the crate by themselves, entice them with a treat and once in, praise the puppy and then let them out. You can begin to give them a "crate" or "kennel" command while they are entering the crate.
3. Practice crate time every day (even if you use the crate while at work). Make sure to practice after the puppy has a chance to relieve themselves and play for awhile. They will be tired and more likely to settle down for a small nap.
4. At first, practice with the crate in a main living area and stay within sight. Do not totally ignore the puppy but do not continuously talk to the pup. Occasional quiet praise or smiles (if it does not cause the puppy to cry or bark) is acceptable.
5. If the puppy begins to cry or bark, tell them "quiet" or "enough." Quietly praise them when they are quiet. You may need to rattle a jar of pennies if they continuously bark or cry when you give them the quiet command.
6. WHEN THE PUPPY IS QUIET, praise them and release them from the crate.
7. When the puppy has gone several days to a week without crying while in the kennel, begin to enter and exit the room the kennel occupies during crate time.
8. Leave the crate door open when not in use, many puppies will voluntarily seek out their quiet space when they are ready for a nap.

Puppies, generally, have bladder control of their age plus one. So, for instance, a three-month old pup can hold it approximately four hours. However, playing and eating will reduce this time. When the puppy is not in the crate, remember to make potty trips after they eat, play or sleep. When the puppy goes outside and goes potty, praise them....and it does not hurt to have a treat in your pocket.

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