



JONESVILLE ANIMAL HOSPITAL

HOUSE SAFETY AND CRATE TRAINING

Why do dogs need to be confined?

Dogs are highly social animals that make wonderful pets. They can be effective as watchdogs, are excellent companions for play and exercise, and are sources of affection and comfort. However, with the lifestyle and schedule of the majority of families, dogs must learn to spend a portion of the day at home, while their human family is away at school, work, shopping or recreational activities. During those times when you are away, your pet (especially young dogs) may chew on things in the house which can be harmful to them. Keeping your dog confined will not only protect your belongings, but also keep your pet safe.

How can these behaviors be prevented?

Preventing such inappropriate behaviors when you are absent involves planning and limiting opportunities. Ensure that your pet has plenty of ways to play and burn off lots of energy before you leave it in a confined area or crate. Be diligent about keeping things out of your pets reach to limit damage to your possessions or injury to your pet.

What are my options for confinement?

Depending on the structure of your home, it may be possible to dog-proof the house by closing a few doors, or putting up some child gates or barricades. Your dog can then be allowed access to the remaining areas of the house. If this dog-proofing is not possible when you have to leave and you are not able to leave your dog with full access to your home, then you can confine your dog to a single room, pen, or crate. This smaller confinement area can provide safety for your dog and protection of the home from chewing damage and house soiling if the dog is not yet housebroken.

Isn't crate training cruel?

Crate training is not cruel if used properly. Ensure that your dog has been fed, had the opportunity to eliminate, and has had sufficient play, exercise and attention before it is confined. Be sure to be home in time to allow your dog to have access to urinating or defecating in a reasonable time frame. If the crate is not being used for housebreaking, then the crate can be very large so your pet has lots of space to move around and sprawl out. Water should be left in the crate at all times and comfortable bedding should be provided. Safe toys and food puzzles should be left available for your pet's entertainment while in the crate.

What are the benefits of crate training?

The most important benefits are the safety and security it affords the pet. The crate can make a pet feel safe and act as a comfortable retreat where the dog can relax, sleep, or chew on a favorite toy. Behavior problems can be prevented by confining the pet to a crate or room when the owner is not available to supervise. When you are at home, supervision and rewards can be used to prevent undesirable behavior,

and to teach your dog where to eliminate, what to chew, and what rooms and areas are “out of bounds.” It is important to understand that if your pet is crated for many hours during the day then it needs an outlet to release energy to avoid developing behavior issues that can occur from overuse of crate confinement.

Will crate confinement help with house-training?

Yes. Crate training is one of the quickest and most effective ways to house-train a dog. Since most dogs instinctively avoid eliminating in their sleeping and eating areas, dogs that use their crate as a bed or “den” will seldom eliminate inside unless they have been left in the crate for too long. Crate training can also help teach the dog to develop control over its elimination.

As soon as your dog is released from its crate, immediately take it on a leash to the designated area and reward elimination using a treat or praise. Since the crate prevents chewing and inappropriate elimination, owners of crate trained puppies have fewer behavior issues, thus fostering a more positive relationship between pet and pet owner.

PUPPY CRATE TRAINING

What type of crate or confinement area works best?

A metal, collapsible crate with a tray floor works well, as long as the crate is large enough for the dog to stand, turn, and stretch out. Some dogs feel more secure if a blanket is draped over the crate. A plastic traveling crate or a homemade crate can also be used. Playpens or barricades may also be successful as long as they are indestructible and escape proof.

Where should the cage be located?

Because dogs are social animals, an ideal location for the crate is a room where the family spends time such as a kitchen, den, or bedroom rather than an isolated room.

How can crating or confinement become a positive experience?

Most dogs quickly choose a small area, such as a corner of a room, in a dog bed, or on or under a couch, where they go to relax. The key to making the crate your dog’s favorite retreat and sleeping area is to associate the crate with as many positive and relaxing experiences and stimuli as possible (food, treats, chew toys, bedding) and to place your dog in its cage only at scheduled rest and sleep periods. You must therefore be aware of your dog’s schedule, including its needs for exploration, play, food, and elimination, so that your dog is only placed in its cage, when each of these needs is fulfilled. You must then return to release your dog from its crate before the next exercise, feeding or elimination period is due.

A radio or television playing in the background may help to calm your dog when it is alone in its cage, especially during the daytime. These may also help to mask environmental noises that can stimulate your dog to vocalize.

Remember, the crate should never be used as punishment.

How do I crate train my new puppy?

- 1) Use positive associations with the crate like treats, toys, food, etc.
- 2) Introduce your puppy to the crate as soon as it is brought home and as early in the day as possible. Place a variety of treats in the crate throughout the day so that your puppy is encouraged to enter voluntarily. Food, water, toys and bedding should also be offered to the puppy in the open crate.
- 3) Choose a location outdoors for the puppy to eliminate. This location should be separate from its play area. Take your puppy to the location on a leash, use a “go potty” command, wait until the puppy eliminates, and reward the puppy lavishly with praise or food. After some additional play and exercise, place the puppy in its crate with water, a toy and a treat and close the door.
- 4) Leave the room but remain close enough to hear the puppy. If your puppy is tired and calm, it may take a “nap” shortly after being placed in its crate. Escape behavior and vocalization are to be expected when a dog is first placed into its crate. If the “complaints” are short or mild, ignore your puppy until the crying stops. Release the puppy from the crate after it has quieted down. This teaches that quiet behavior, and not crying will be rewarded. Release the puppy after a few minutes of quiet or a short nap. If the vocalization or behavior is one of panic, such as chewing at the bars, frantically digging at the cage bottom, drooling, or displaying panicked behavior, then this could be a sign of crate anxiety. You should alert your veterinarian if you notice these types of behavior as crating your puppy may worsen its anxiety.
- 5) Repeat the crate and release procedure a few more times during the day before bedtime. Place the puppy in its crate a few times before the end of the day. Each time, increase the time that the dog must stay in the crate before letting it out. Always give the puppy exercise and a chance to eliminate before securing it in the crate. Always provide water, toys and comfortable bedding while in the crate.
- 6) When you are home, take the puppy out to the potty area every hour to minimize opportunities to have an accident in the house.
- 7) When you bring your puppy back indoors after outside playtime, first take your pet to the potty area to “remind” it to go to the bathroom before going back inside.
- 8) At bedtime, your dog should be exercised, placed in its crate, and left alone for the night. Do not go to the dog if it cries. Keeping the crate in the bedroom may help keep your puppy more calm.
- 9) If your pup sleeps in one end of its crate and eliminates in the other, a divider can be installed to keep the puppy in a smaller area until it learns not to soil in its crate.
- 10) Never leave the puppy in its crate for longer than it can control itself or it may be forced to eliminate in the crate.
- 11) If the pup must be left for long periods during which it might eliminate, it should be confined to a larger area such as a dog-proof room or pen with a pee pad left down for elimination. As the puppy gets older, its control increases and it can be left longer in its crate.
- 12) A crate is not an excuse to ignore your dog!

CRATE TRAINING ADULT DOGS

What is the best technique for crate training older pets and adult dogs?

- 1) For adult dogs or older puppies that have not been crate trained previously, set up the crate in the dog's feeding area with the door open for a few days. Place food, treats, and water in the crate so that the dog enters the crate on its own. Another alternative is to place the crate in the dog's sleeping area with its bedding. Once the dog is entering the crate freely, it is time to close the door.
- 2) Using the same training techniques as for 'sit' and 'stay' training, have the dog enter its crate for short periods of time to obtain food, treats, or chew toys. Once the pet expects treats each time it enters the crate, train the dog to enter the crate on command (e.g. kennel!), and have the dog remain in the kennel for progressively longer periods of time, before the dog is allowed to exit. Give small rewards each time the dog enters the cage at first, and give the dog a favorite chew toy, food puzzle toy or some food to help make the stay more enjoyable. At first, the door can remain open during these training sessions.
- 3) When the dog is capable of staying comfortably and quietly in the crate begin to lock the crate at nighttime. Once the dog sleeps in the crate through the night, try leaving the pet in the crate during the daytime. Try short departures first, and gradually make them longer.

Is crate training practical for all dogs?

An occasional dog may not tolerate crate training, and may continue to show anxiety, or even eliminate when confined. These dogs may adapt better to other types of confinement such as a pen, dog run, small room, or barricaded area. Of course, if the dog is being left alone for longer than it can control (hold in) its elimination, it will be necessary to provide an area much larger than a cage, so that the pet has a location on which to eliminate, away from its food and bedding. If there is not enough opportunity for your dog to experience play and physical activities then the pet may become more anxious in the crate.

Continued anxiety, destruction or vocalization when placed in the crate may indicate separation anxiety. The intervention of a behaviorist may be needed.