

CRATE TRAINING



Austin and Astro chilling in a crate together after some playtime

Why do we crate train dogs?

The crate can be a safe space for your dog and help it learn some independence. More importantly it's a foundation for potty training, and it can come in handy in other training situations later in your dog's life.

However, putting a dog in a crate without proper training can be traumatizing, so it's important to get this training right.

How do we teach dogs to enjoy their crate?

- ❖ Place your dog's crate in an area where you and the family hang out the most. Initially, it should be close to where you sit or sleep.
- ❖ Make your dog's crate comfortable and inviting by putting comfortable blankets or pillows inside. **Understand they may get torn up.**
- ❖ Put some of your dog's toys in the crate. Puppies should not be left with toys they can choke on or swallow. A Kong with a frozen treat is excellent.
- ❖ Put your dog's food and water bowl inside its crate and only feed it there.
- ❖ During the day leave the crate door open and let your dog come and go inside as it pleases.

The conundrum

The above is referred to as crate acclimation and can take days or weeks, so how are you supposed to utilize the crate for potty training while acclimating your dog? Here are a few steps that can help:

- ❖ Acknowledge that the process isn't easy and you can expect to hear some whining and barking.
- ❖ Give your dog (especially puppies) plenty of exercise throughout the day. Nothing beats playtime with other puppies. A 20 min walk is nothing for a puppy that has triathlete-like energy.
- ❖ Enrichment activities, like foraging or treat puzzles can also help reduce your puppies energy.
- ❖ Ensure all of your puppy's needs have been met before shutting the crate door: Full medical bill of health, play, affection, potty time, food and water.
- ❖ Understand that if you let your puppy out of the crate because it's whining or barking, you have just taught it to whine or bark when it wants out, which can also transfer to other situations.
- ❖ The extinction chart, plots the amount of time a puppy barks and whines in a crate over the course of 30 days. Note the extinction burst. This is where most owners say, I can't take it, it's getting worse, and this isn't working. However, notice that the barking and whining continues to decrease after the extinction burst. Typically your dog will stop barking and whining within 30 days, often much sooner. How Dogs Learn, by Mary R. Birch PhD and Jon S Bailey Ph.D.