



Hampstead Animal Hospital

CRATE TRAINING

Crate training is a strategy to prevent and cure several behavior problems. Crating a dog makes house training easier, eliminates destructive chewing, and is a safe way for a dog to travel. Crate trained dogs stress less if they have to stay at the vet's, where they will be in a crate or cage.

A crate, also called a cage or kennel, is a small enclosure made of wire or solid material such as wood or fiberglass, large enough for the dog to lie down, stand up, turn around, period. This represents to the dog what the den represents to his ancestor, the wolf--a small, safe enclosure where he can rest, undisturbed. Once accustomed to it, dogs often seek out their crates and don't mind getting into them.

We remember the first time someone suggested crating our dog, a destructive chewer. We were horrified, thinking it cruel to cage her. We didn't consider how cruel it was to be angry with her about the destruction-of-the-day, causing her anxiety and distress. Once she got used to her crate, it was not only not cruel, she sought it out as her room, her bed, the place she went when she wanted to rest. She didn't mind the crate, but we minded it, at first. Once we got used to it, we recognized the value of the crate and of crating a dog.

To train your dog to a crate, regardless of age, follow the steps below:

RULES:

- 1) Always give your dog a treat for getting in the crate when you are getting he or she used to it. Once trained, give him/her a treat occasionally.
- 2) Don't show apprehension or act apologetic for putting the dog in the crate. You wouldn't want to be in it, but you're not a dog. Don't identify with how you think he/she feels. Act as if it's no big deal, and she/he will, too.
- 3) Don't use the crate for punishment. Avoid putting him/her in angrily, or while you are chastising. He/she will associate your anger with the crate. Always praise him/her for getting in.
- 4) If he/she is barking in the crate, make him/her be quiet before letting him/her out.
- 5) If you dog urinates or defecates in the crate, don't chastise him/her. She/he has suffered enough by merely being unable to get away from the mess. Simply take him/her out and clean the crate.

CRATE TRAINING:

- 1) Set up the crate in an area you use frequently, such as the kitchen or family room, and allow time for your dog to explore it on their own, inside and out. Encourage them to investigate it, talking to them in a happy voice, even laughing. Rattle it, to show that it may make noise. Talk happily and laugh, showing no concern.
- 2) Armed with treats, take your dog over to the crate and give him or her a command such as “kennel” or “go to bed”. Entice him/her into the crate, praise and **immediately** give him/her a treat. If they choose to get right out again, allow it. If he/she is reluctant to get in, put a treat just inside the door, then a little farther, and so on until he/she realizes it’s safe.
- 3) Command him or her in, give them a treat, close the door and leave the room for 5 seconds. Return, praise the dog for being quiet, open the door and let them out. Repeat, gradually increasing the time in 10 second increments.
- 4) When you have increased the time your dog is crated, you can crate him/her when you leave the house. Don’t make a big issue out of it. Act as you did when you left the room. No teary good-byes. Just leave.
- 5) (Optional) Feed your dog in the crate. Prepare the meal, take it to the crate, command the dog in, put the dish in, close the door and walk away. When the dog is done eating, let him/her out.
- 6) (Optional--important with puppies) Have the crate by your bed, and put your puppy in it to sleep. When a young puppy wakes during the night, carry him or her out, wait until he/she urinates or defecates, take him/her back to the crate and both of you go back to sleep.