

# HOUSE TRAINING USING A CRATE

*The key to house training is to have your dog eliminate in the correct area 95% of the time. You also need to be able to interrupt him as he is making a mistake 100% of the other times. Each time your dog relieves himself in your house it allows him to practice a bad habit. So the best way to house train a dog is to prevent the habit from forming.*

Using a crate is a wonderful method for house training. This type of training is based on the fact that normally dogs will not eliminate where they sleep. (This isn't necessarily true for puppies that have been forced to eliminate where they sleep, such as in a pet store). Because the crate is a sleeping area for your dog, he will keep it clean. Crating your dog will prevent him from eliminating when you can't supervise. A crated dog is learning to control his bladder and bowels, which is key to being house trained. If he is to learn where the designated potty area is, he needs to be able to hold it until you are able to take him there.

Some people resist the idea of crating their dog at first. But introducing the crate in a positive manner can condition your dog to love being in his crate. Many times dogs will continue to use their crates as a resting area even years after the door has been removed. There are other advantages to having a dog that is used to a crate. It is much easier to travel and stay in a hotel if your dog is used to being crated. Additionally he will be more comfortable if there is ever a need to stay overnight at the veterinary clinic. Another advantage is that you won't have to worry about your dog chewing on your furniture, baseboards or destroying your possessions. Preventing these behaviors from occurring is a huge step towards keeping your dog from developing unpleasant chewing habits.

The crate should be just big enough for your dog to stand up, turn around, and lie down in. If it's any bigger your dog will simply eliminate in a corner and sleep in the dry area. You can buy a crate for a puppy that will be big enough for when your dog is an adult, and partition a smaller area for use for now. The crate should be used whenever you can't watch your dog, or whenever you aren't home.

Keep in mind that a young puppy has a very small bladder and probably doesn't have the control to hold it longer than 3 or 4 hours. The rule of thumb is one hour for every month of age during the day, and 2 hours per month for nighttime. If you're going to be away longer than that, you need to get someone to come let him out. You also need to make sure that your dog gets a lot of exercise when you are home, since he'll be confined when you're gone. A young puppy may also require that you get up in the middle of the night to let him out.

When you are home and the puppy is loose you need to watch him with an eagle eye every second. You can either gate him in the same room with you, or tether him to you so he's within eyesight at all times. If he does start to potty you need to interrupt him as he is going and immediately take him outside to finish. You can startle him into stopping by making a loud noise, or simply scoop him up and take him outside.

When he does go potty outside make a big deal out of it each and every time. Going potty is very rewarding to your puppy simply because he is no longer uncomfortable. This makes it much more important to make sure he gets other rewards when he's relieving himself outside. After all, if he gets the same feeling of relief inside as he does outside, then why should he care where he eliminates? Therefore impress upon him what a truly wonderful thing he's just done! Praise him as he is going, and give him a food reward immediately after he's finished. Consider carefully what kind of treats you are using as a reward. Remember that one of the most important things your dog is going to learn in order to be a good member of your household is where to relieve himself. Something so hugely important deserves the best reinforcer your dog is ever going to get. Pieces of chicken, steak or liver saved from the night before will make a much bigger impact than kibble and dry biscuits. The treat does not have to be a large piece. I've found that small pieces the size of a raisin are enough to reward a dog.

You also need to take him outside much more often than you think you should. I suggest that a dog that is not yet house trained be taken outside every 20 minutes at first. Although this may sound extreme, it works to help prevent him from having an accident inside. It also increases your chances that he'll actually relieve himself outside. This gives you a more opportunities to reward him. Keep in mind that the more he gets a reward for doing the right thing, the more likely it will be that he'll do it. Remember that your goal is to have him eliminate outside 95% of the time – so you should do every thing you can to tip the scales in your favor.

Each dog is an individual. While some dogs may be house trained after only a few weeks, others may take a few months. Much of it depends on you. If you're consistent in preventing and interrupting accidents, take your dog out often enough, and reward for out door elimination it will go much faster.

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