



## Crate Training Your Puppy

### Why crate train your puppy?

Used properly, a crate is an effective tool for managing, transporting, and training your puppy. Her crate becomes her den, a special place where she can go to sleep, when she is unsupervised, or when she needs a break from the kids. Crates make housetraining easier because dogs don't like to soil their sleeping areas, so she will naturally avoid eliminating in her crate. Crates can be easily misused, however. No dog should spend most of her day, every day, in a crate. Crating any dog for more than 10 hours in a day is considered inhumane. Puppies can only be crated, and left alone, for however many hours are equal to their age in months, plus one (for example, a two months old can tolerate three hours, at most).

### How to crate train your puppy

- **Prepare ahead** - Before bringing your new puppy home, prepare a dog-proofed space for her with a crate, bowls, and toys. Use an ex-pen or baby gate to restrict her to a certain part of the house, such as the kitchen. Puppies should not be given free range of the house and be sure to thoroughly puppy-proof any spaces to which she will have access. When you choose a crate it should be big enough for your puppy to turn around and lie down but not any bigger. If a crate is too big she will have room for a bathroom corner and a sleeping corner. Place a cozy bed and a few toys in the crate and don't provide additional beds outside of the crate.
- **The introduction** – When you bring your puppy home be sure to provide her with an opportunity to eliminate outside before bringing her indoors. After a bathroom break, place her in the area you have set up and toss a few treats into the crate. Let her explore her new space and resist the urge to force her to enter the crate. Eventually, she will walk into the crate and discover the treats. Praise her profusely for going in the crate and continue to reload it with new treats for her to discover at least 10 times a day for the first week.
- **Feeding and kongs** – Dogs learn through association, so you can teach your puppy to love her crate by feeding her every meal in the crate. You can stuff a kong with her food and put it in the crate, hand feed her in the crate, or simply put her food bowl in the crate. This will teach her that she gets wonderful things in the crate so she will learn to love it. It is important to leave the crate door open while you teach her to associate the crate with good things.
- **The first few nights** - A puppy's first night in your home may be stressful since it is likely to be her first night alone. After her bedtime potty break, put her in the crate with a cozy bed and toys, turn off the lights and leave the area. Resist the urge to go back to her once she starts whining. If you give in to her whining she will learn that it gets her attention and will

cry longer and louder next time. Your pup will soon settle down and go to sleep. If, however, you hear your puppy cry in the middle of the night, she is likely whining because she needs to go to the bathroom. Take her out, reward her for eliminating outside, and then put her back to bed.

- **Teaching her to spend time in the crate** – Help your puppy continue to associate her crate with good things by giving her stuffed kongs, nylabones, or new toys only when she is in her crate. Stuff a kong with peanut butter or cheese whiz and put it in the crate with your puppy and occasionally shut the door. Any time she goes into her crate on her own praise her and drop a few treats into the crate. Before you know it your pup will choose the crate as the preferred place to sleep in and chew on her toys.
- **Slowly increasing the time alone** – It is important to slowly increase the amount of time your puppy spends in her crate. Keeping in mind her age, and how much time she can spend alone, start to expect longer periods of time crated. Crate her while you watch a television show, then let her out for a potty break and play time. Crate her for a trip to the mailbox, the grocery store, or while you go to pick up the kids. Remember to always provide her with a stuffed kong, chew toys, and cozy bed when she is in the crate.
- **Teaching her to go in the crate on cue** – You want your puppy to learn to go into her crate on cue so that as she grows you don't need to ever physically put her in the crate. Toss treats into the crate while providing a hand signal and/or verbal signal for her to enter the crate. When she does, praise her and reward her with more treats. Use your hand signal and/or verbal signal whenever she goes into the crate, followed by a reward, and pretty soon she'll learn what they mean!
- **Troubleshooting** – If your puppy is scared to enter the crate at first simply lure her in with a trail of treats. You can also place toys, kongs, and her food bowl just inside the door and slowly move it to the back of the crate as she becomes comfortable with the crate. If your puppy whimpers and whines while in the crate ignore it and leave the room. Be sure to NEVER open the door while she is vocalizing. This will teach her that whining or barking leads to the door opening so the next time she wants out she will whine or bark louder and longer.

**We Can Help!** The Training and Behavior Department at the Humane Society of Western Montana has a variety of resources available to help you and your pets live in harmony! The Humane Society has several dog trainers and a behaviorist on staff to provide affordable group and private training lessons and free behavior consultations.

- Contact Jean, our Behaviorist for a free pet behavior consultation by emailing [behavior@myhswm.org](mailto:behavior@myhswm.org) or calling the Behavior Helpline at (406) 549-9295.
- Contact Mariah, a Certified Professional Dog Trainer, to inquire about private lessons or a group training class. Email [outreach@myhswm.org](mailto:outreach@myhswm.org) or call (406) 549-HSWM.
- Check out our website at [www.myhswm.org](http://www.myhswm.org) for a complete listing of dog classes, rates and additional information.