

Cage training

By Dr. Gary Landsberg

Wouldn't it be great if someone developed a device for dogs that prevents destruction, chewing and garbage raiding? The perfect device would also:

- Assist in housebreaking
- Prevent jumping up.
- Ensure that your dog was safe when unsupervised.
- Help you to develop a closer relationship with your dog.
- Help you to teach your dog not to whine or cry during the night.
- Help your dog adapt to being left alone.
- Give your dog a comfortable retreat of his own.

Well, all you have to do is buy or build a proper cage for your dog and you'll own one invaluable training aid – The Crate.

Crate training is ideal for just about every new pup and it even works for most adult dogs. Done correctly, it is neither cruel nor unpleasant for the dog: in fact a properly crate-trained dog feels happy, secure and comfortable in his cage. In the wild, dogs and wolves need a den or hide-a-way for their home. Except for hunting, elimination, playtime and protection, they spend hours sleeping, eating or relaxing in their den. Most well trained, contented house pets spend more of the day curled up on a chesterfield or under a bed. The cage-trained dog is simply taught that his bed is in the cage.

Crate training, or confinement, is the quickest and most effective way to housebreak a puppy of an adult dog (when combined with proper housebreaking techniques). If you must leave the pup unsupervised for several hours or even a few minutes, simply confine him to his cage. If you have trained your dog that his cage is his "den", he will keep it clean. With this technique, owners have been able to housebreak some pups in a matter of days.

Pups and some adult dogs are extremely inquisitive especially if they get bored. They may chew or destroy hundreds of dollars worth of furniture and property and can even harm themselves by chewing electrical cords, plants, or raiding garbage cans, etc. We all know that a child or baby needs constant supervision unless confined to the safety of a crib or playpen. Treat your pup the same way – confine him when you cannot supervise. Put a few chew toys in the crate and he may even get in the habit of chewing the right things! And when you do come home, the pup will not be able to jump up or run out the door. Many people have difficulty getting a new pup to sleep throughout the night. When left alone, the pup begins to howl or cry for company and attention, because he has never been separated from people or other dogs. You must not go to him as this just encourages the crying. Using cage training you can practice turning out the light and leaving the room for short periods. By nighttime, the pup should be accustomed to being alone. Another alternative is to put the pup in the cage in your bedroom at night.

As you can see, cage trained puppies seldom misbehave and need far less discipline. This results in a happier and closer puppy-owner relationship.

The cage need not be permanent. Most dogs, once trained, enter their cage on their own, and whenever they want to relax or be left alone. Other dogs enjoy their cages but may have another location they prefer, such as a bedroom. Once the dog can be trusted, you could try leaving him loose in his favorite room, with the cage door open, to see how he does.

Remember that dogs need a den and a place of retreat. Provide your pet with a cage, train him properly, and you'll be doing your pet and yourself a great favor.

How to cage train

A collapsible dog cage with a metal tray floor, just large enough for an adult dog to stand comfortably is the most practical type of cage. Alternatively, you could build a crate or doghouse. For additional comfort or security, a blanket can be placed over the top. Choose a floor covering the dog doesn't chew such as newspaper or towels. The covering should also be easy to clean or dispose of.

Place the crate in a room where the dog will be content. A basement or laundry room is too isolated. Kitchens or bedrooms work best.

Before placing the dog in his crate, be certain he has had sufficient exercise and attention. Some dogs may be contented with a five-minute walk, but many dogs are not tired out until they have been given 15 to 30 minutes of vigorous exercise.

Leave the dog's water bowl and chew toys in the cage at all times and give all food and treats inside the cage so that the dog learns to enter on his own. Reward him whenever he goes in the cage. The cage must be an enjoyable place and must never be used for punishment.

Begin cage training a pup when you first bring him home. With adult dogs, it may take a week or two before he feels comfortable enough to enter the cage on his own.

Place the dog in the cage with a few chew toys or treats and a bowl of water, close the door and leave the room. Stay within hearing range. If the dog is quiet for about five minutes, return, reward the dog and let him out. If he will not stay quiet, you should use some form of remote punishment because you must not go to the dog. Try leaving an intercom or walky-talky by the dog. A loud horn or a can of marbles will also work. At the first sign of any crying or anxiety, make a loud noise and yell "quit". Sometimes spraying water at the dog works better. When the dog is quiet, let him out and praise him.

Repeat the procedure, gradually increasing the amount of time you leave the dog alone. By the end of the first day, you should be able to confine your pup for several hours or even the entire night. An adult dog will have to be trained much more gradually, perhaps over several weeks.

The time in the cage should never exceed a puppy's limit. A two-month old pup can probably control himself for three hours, a three-month old pup for four hours, etc.

If you must leave a pup for longer than the above guidelines, you will have to combine cage and paper training. Place the cage in a room, leave the door open and place paper for eliminating outside the cage. Keep the pup in this room if you must go out for long periods.

Provided by the Washington K-9 Academy
Obedience-Personal Protection – French Ring Sport – Problem Dogs
(206) 581 – 4123
To purchase bite suits and sleeves, collars, etc. Please call the Washington K-9 Academy