

HOUSETRAINING: Good Housetraining Is No Accident!

The ability to housetrain dogs (or perhaps, for our ancestors, cave-train) is one of the reasons dogs and people cohabit so well. Dogs are "den" animals and don't like to eliminate where they eat and sleep. This is why it's possible to housetrain them.

Obviously, if you've acquired a new puppy, some serious housetraining will be in order. But even if you've adopted an adult dog who was previously housetrained, some retraining will need to be done.

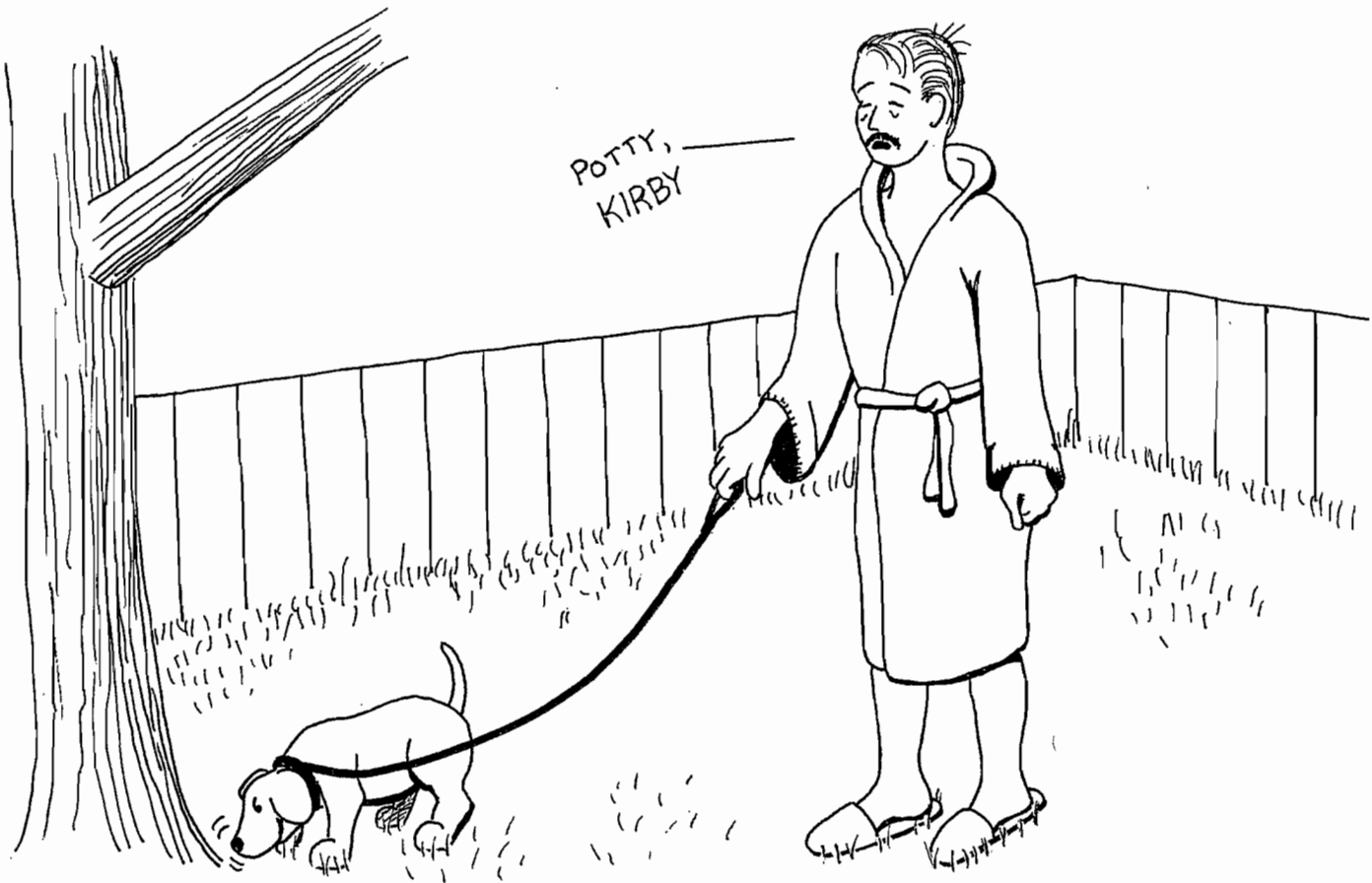
Tips for successful housetraining:

- **Teach the dog where to eliminate.** This is one of the most overlooked aspects of housetraining a dog! Relying on a punishment-only method of housetraining (where you punish the dog for accidents but don't train him where to go) is not a fair or effective way to housetrain. For one thing, the dog would need to be punished in every area of the house before he would learn it's not okay to eliminate there. Also, if you rely on the punishment-only method, chances are you're going to train your pooch not to eliminate in front of you. Susan had adopted a nice, friendly little dog, but was having big problems with housetraining. The dog would only eliminate under the bed. When questioned about her housetraining methods, it turned out that she punished the dog for accidents, but never taught the dog where he was supposed to go. She let the dog outside, but never went along to praise it for eliminating outside. What the dog had learned was "Don't go to the bathroom in front of Mom--she always gets mad." So this little dog learned to eliminate under the bed where Mom couldn't see. Not a happy housetraining story.

In the first several weeks of housetraining, it's very important that you go outside with the dog. There are two reasons for this:

- (1) If you're not out with the puppy, you won't know whether he's gone. You then won't know whether it's okay for him to have some free playtime in the house.
- (2) Most important, you won't be there to praise and reward him with a treat for eliminating outside where he's supposed to go.

When you begin housetraining, decide where you want your dog to eliminate. This is your dog's toilet area. A quiet corner of the yard might be a good choice. Take your dog out to his toilet area when it's time for him to go. Watch him and instruct him to "Potty" or "Hurry Up." As soon as he starts to eliminate, praise him gently ("Good potty"). If you consistently say a word such as "Potty" when he eliminates, you can teach your dog to eliminate on command. As soon as he has finished, praise enthusiastically and give him a treat right then. Don't wait until you come back into the house. Dogs are "of the moment." if you reinforce him after you come back inside, from the dog's point of view he's getting reinforced for coming inside, not for eliminating outside.



POTTY,
KIRBY

Select a toilet area and teach your dog to go there.



GOOD
POTTY,
KIRBY!

Praise your dog and give him a treat for eliminating in his toilet area.

This does take extra time at first. Sure it's hard while you're getting ready for work to take time to go out with your pup and watch him, and praise him for doing his business outside, but the time spent teaching your dog where to go will speed up the housetraining process, and lead to a better trained dog. Also, from your dog's point of view, it's really the only fair way to housetrain. Reprimanding him for accidents is only fair if you're teaching him where he's supposed to eliminate.

- **Thoroughly clean up all accidents with an odor neutralizer.** Even if you do everything right, some accidents will happen! Your dog isn't being stupid or spiteful, he just doesn't understand the rules yet. Housetraining takes consistency, patience, and time.

When you do catch your dog in the act of having an accident, immediately interrupt him with a loud "No," "Ehh," or "Nahh." Clap your hands. This should stop the action. Immediately take him outside to his toilet area (scoop him up and carry him if he's small enough), and then praise and reward if he finishes his business outside where he's supposed to go.

It's very important that you clean up any accidents with an odor neutralizer. Dogs like to "go" where there is already a scent, so you must remove the scent to prevent future accidents in the same area. Commercial odor neutralizers are available and probably work best, but you also can use a solution of 50% vinegar and water. Never use a product containing ammonia to clean up an accident. Ammonia is present in urine, and the smell is an invitation for the dog to use the same spot again.

If you find a mess in the house but didn't catch the dog in the act, just thoroughly clean it up. Never rub a dog's nose in a mess, or hit or spank him. Sure the dog will look guilty if you act mad and point to the mess. He'd act just as guilty if you acted mad and pointed for no reason at all. He's reacting to your body language and tone of voice. Punishment after the fact isn't effective, and will just confuse the dog and undermine your relationship with him. When you find an accident, stay calm. Put the dog out of sight so he can't watch you clean it up. Then thoroughly clean the area with an odor neutralizer and reevaluate your schedule and supervision of the pup.

If you're repeatedly having accidents in one area, even though you're thoroughly cleaning it up each time, try spending some time with the dog in that area, or even feeding him there. Dogs don't like to eliminate where they spend time, or where they eat.

- **Set a consistent feeding schedule with good quality dog food, and set a humane schedule for taking your dog out.** Dogs thrive on routine. By feeding and exercising your dog at regular times, your dog also will eliminate about the same time every day. Just as puppies need to eat more frequently than adult dogs do, they need to eliminate two to three times more frequently. Feed your dog a good-quality dog food and stick to it. Changing your dog's diet frequently will upset his housetraining.

Puppies gradually are able to exercise better control over their bowels and bladder, and last longer without the need to eliminate, but gaining that control takes time. The younger the puppy, the more frequently he'll need to go. When puppies are active and playing, they will have to go out more frequently. Until at least six months of age, you can't really expect a puppy to last for more than four hours during the day without having to go out. By four months of age, though, most pups easily should be able to make it through the night.

Here's a sample schedule for a three-month-old puppy:

6:00 a.m. -- Go out. When you first wake up, put on your robe and immediately take your puppy out to his toilet area. No dawdling--the puppy needs to go right away. Supervise and reward the puppy for doing his business in the toilet area.

6:30 a.m. -- Feed and play. Breakfast and brief playtime.

7:00 a.m. -- Go out/Play and train. Remember, while you're housetraining you need to go outside with the pup to be sure he went, and to praise and reward him for doing his business in his toilet area.

8:00 a.m.-12 noon -- Puppy asleep in crate.

12:00 p.m. -- Go out.

12:10 p.m. -- Eat.

12:40 p.m. -- Go out.

1:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m. -- Puppy asleep in crate.

5:00 p.m. -- Go out/Play and train.

5:30 p.m. -- Eat and play.

6:00 p.m. -- Go out.

6:30 p.m.-10:30 p.m. -- Supervised play. Watch for any signs that your puppy needs to go out. Sniffing the floor, circling, or squatting are all signs that your puppy immediately needs to go out.

10:30 p.m. -- Go out.

11:00 p.m. -- Sleep in crate.

In addition to the above scheduled times to go out, your puppy will need to go out after a nap, or after intense play, exercise, or exertion.

Having a puppy can be a challenge when you work all day. If at all possible, come home at lunch to take your puppy out, feed him, and spend a little time with him. If it's not possible to come home, consider finding a reliable neighbor, or hiring someone to let your puppy out.

Another alternative is to install a pet door that leads out to a safe, fenced area and back inside to a safe, puppy-proofed room. You'll have to train your puppy or dog to use such a door.

- **Use a crate or other safe confinement.** Crates, when used humanely and correctly, are a great aid to housetraining. Your puppy will not want to eliminate in an area where he sleeps and spends time. Remember, don't leave a puppy in a crate during the day for longer than four hours, or an adult for longer than eight hours. And never leave a collar on a dog in a crate.

If you don't use a crate, you need to puppy-proof a small area, such as the bathroom or kitchen, to leave your puppy in during the day. Be sure all dangerous objects such as cleaners and electrical cords are out of your pup's

way, that the toilet lid is down, and that all trash is secured. Carefully puppy-proof any area in which you're going to leave your puppy or newly adopted dog, to be sure there is nothing that can harm him. It's better to confine your dog behind a baby gate than behind a closed door--he won't feel as isolated.

- **Supervise.** Just as it's important to safely confine your pup when you're away, you must supervise him when you're home. Some people like to attach a line to the pup's collar and tie it to their belt so they know where their pup is at all times. As your puppy becomes older, or your newly adopted adult proves he can be trusted, he can have greater run of the house for longer periods of time.

Remember to watch your puppy or dog carefully for any signs that he needs to go out.

Houstraining Dos and Don'ts

DOs

Select a toilet area and teach your dog to go there.

Go out with your dog so you can see if he went, and reward him for going. Choose a word to say as he goes, so you can teach him to go on command.

Interrupt if you catch him in the act, and take him out to his toilet area.

If it's after the fact, just clean it up.

Thoroughly clean up any accidents with an odor neutralizer.

Supervise when you're home.

Set up a consistent feeding schedule with a good dog food.

Set a humane schedule for taking your dog out.

Use a crate or other safe confinement when you're not home.

DON'Ts

Don't rely on a punishment-only mode of houstraining.

Don't just put him out in the yard. Who knows if he went or not? How's he supposed to learn this is where he's to go?

Never hit a dog for having an accident.

Never rub a dog's nose in it.

Don't use ammonia to clean up an accident.

Don't give a puppy run of the house when you're not there to supervise.

Don't change dog foods frequently, or feed on a haphazard schedule.

Don't expect a puppy under six months of age to last more than four hours during the day without having to go out.

Don't ignore the warning signs of circling or sniffing.

Part of responsible dog ownership is keeping the dog waste in your yard cleaned up, and cleaning up after your dog in public places. Please be a good neighbor and member of the community: Clean up after your dog!

CRATE EXPECTATIONS: Crate Training Your Dog

Crates are the cribs and playpens of the dog world. Can you imagine having a baby or toddler without a crib and playpen? Once you've used a crate to train a puppy or dog, it's hard to imagine training without one.

Dogs are den animals who curl up and sleep in den-like areas. If you've ever owned a dog before, you know that they like to curl up under tables and other den-like places. Crates, used properly, become a cozy den--a refuge--for your dog.

The Advantages of Crate Training

- Crate training is ideal for housetraining. Your dog will not want to eliminate where it eats, sleeps, or spends time. Using a crate makes it easier to set a housetraining schedule and avoid accidents.
- Crates keep your dog safe and out of trouble when you're not there to supervise. Chewing, house soiling, excessive barking, and other behavior problems can be avoided using a crate.
- Crates enable you to travel with your dog more easily and safely.
- If your dog is ever sick or injured, already having him crate trained will be a big advantage.
- The crate can be a private refuge for the dog--a place to get away from the kids or the hustle and bustle of daily life.

The "Nevers" of Crate Training

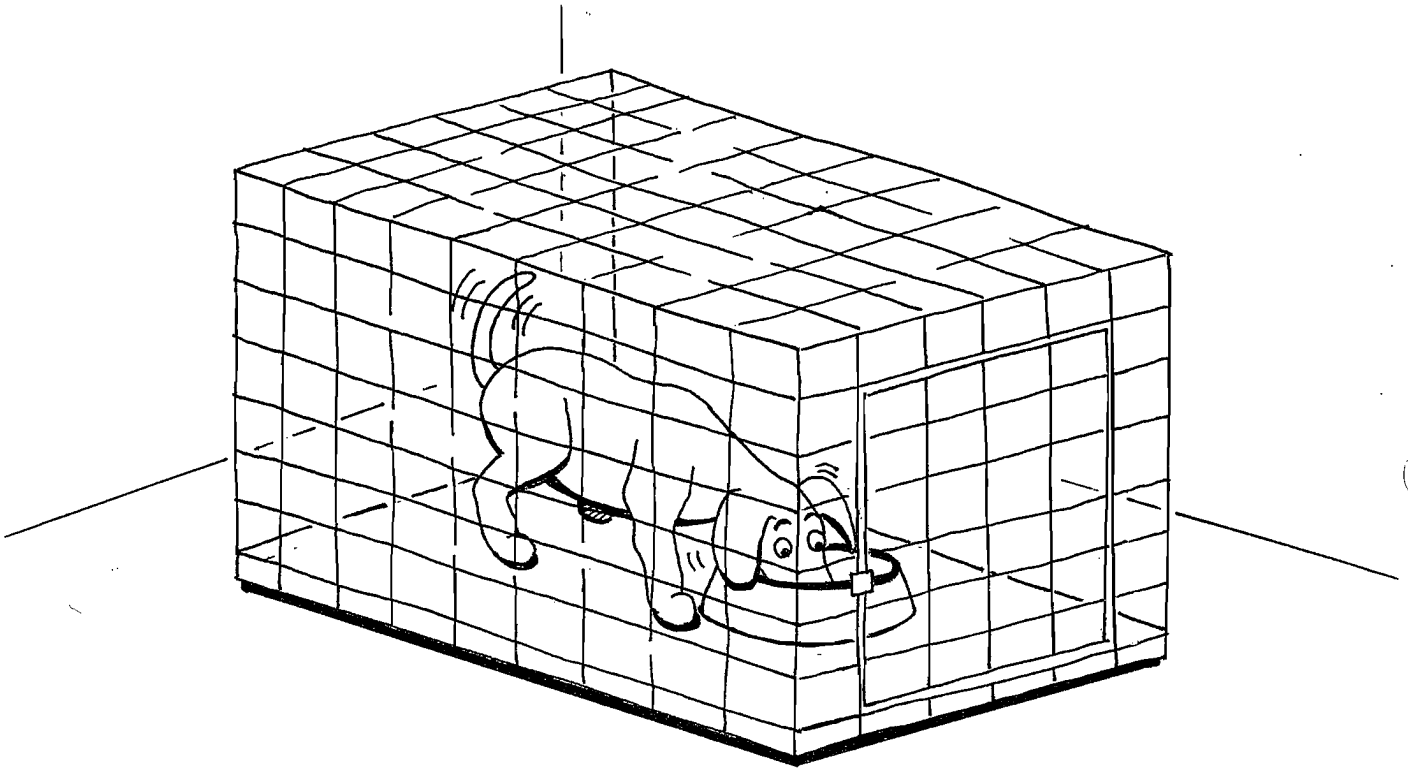
Crates are only good if used correctly and humanely. Here are some "nevers" about crate training:

- Never leave a puppy in a crate for longer than four hours at a time during the day.
- Never leave any dog in a crate longer than eight hours--and then only if you've given the dog a lot of exercise and attention before and afterwards.
- Never use the crate as punishment for the dog.
- Dogs are social animals. They need lots of attention and training. Never use the crate as a prison to avoid having to deal with your doggy's needs.
- Never, ever leave a collar on a dog in a crate. The collar can get caught and the dog could strangle. Some folks new to crate training like to leave a note on the top of the crate ("Collar OFF?") to remind them of this very important rule.
- Never let kids poke at or bother a dog in his crate. It's his private area.

Choosing a Crate

The crate should be large enough so that your dog can easily stand up, turn around, and comfortably lie down. If you have a puppy, buy a crate that will be large enough for him as an adult.

There are two types of crates: wire crates and plastic airline crates. The disadvantages of the plastic crates are that they can be hot on warm days, and that the plastic can absorb odors. A good quality wire crate that collapses into a compact "suitcase" form is easily portable so you can take it with you when you travel. A good crate is a good investment.



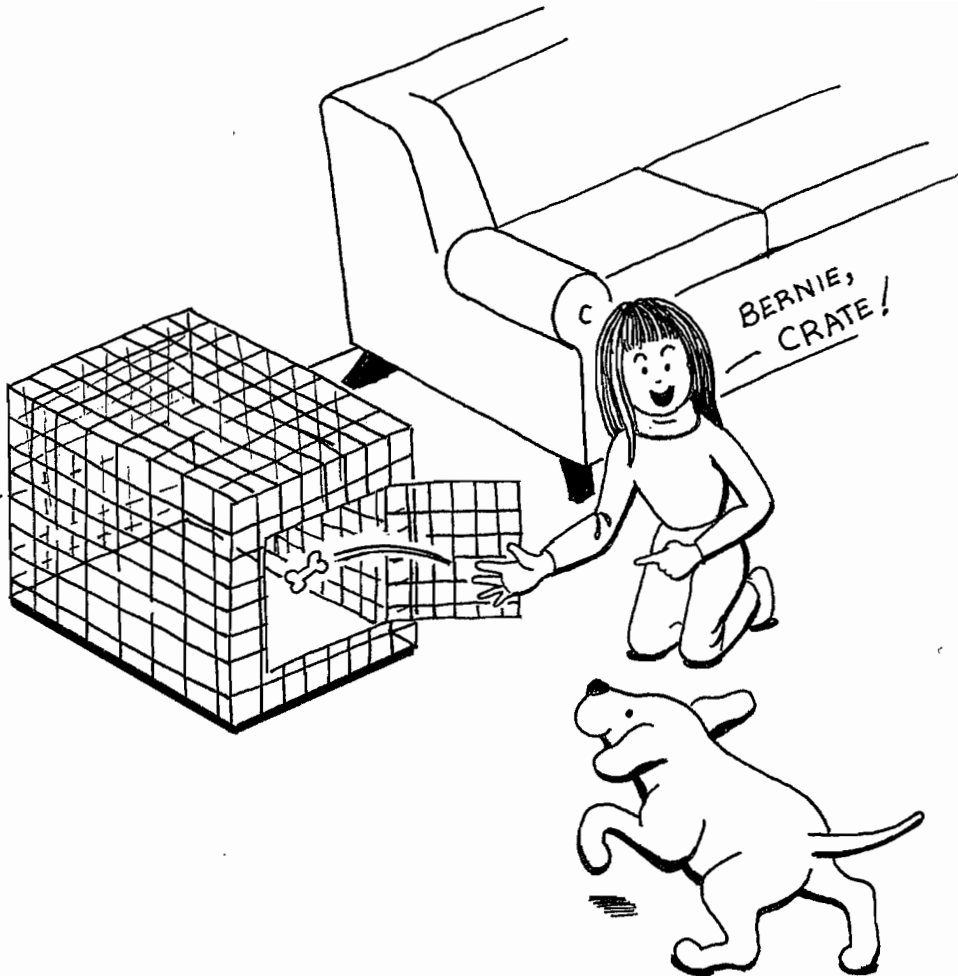
Initially feed the puppy in his crate.

Location of the Crate

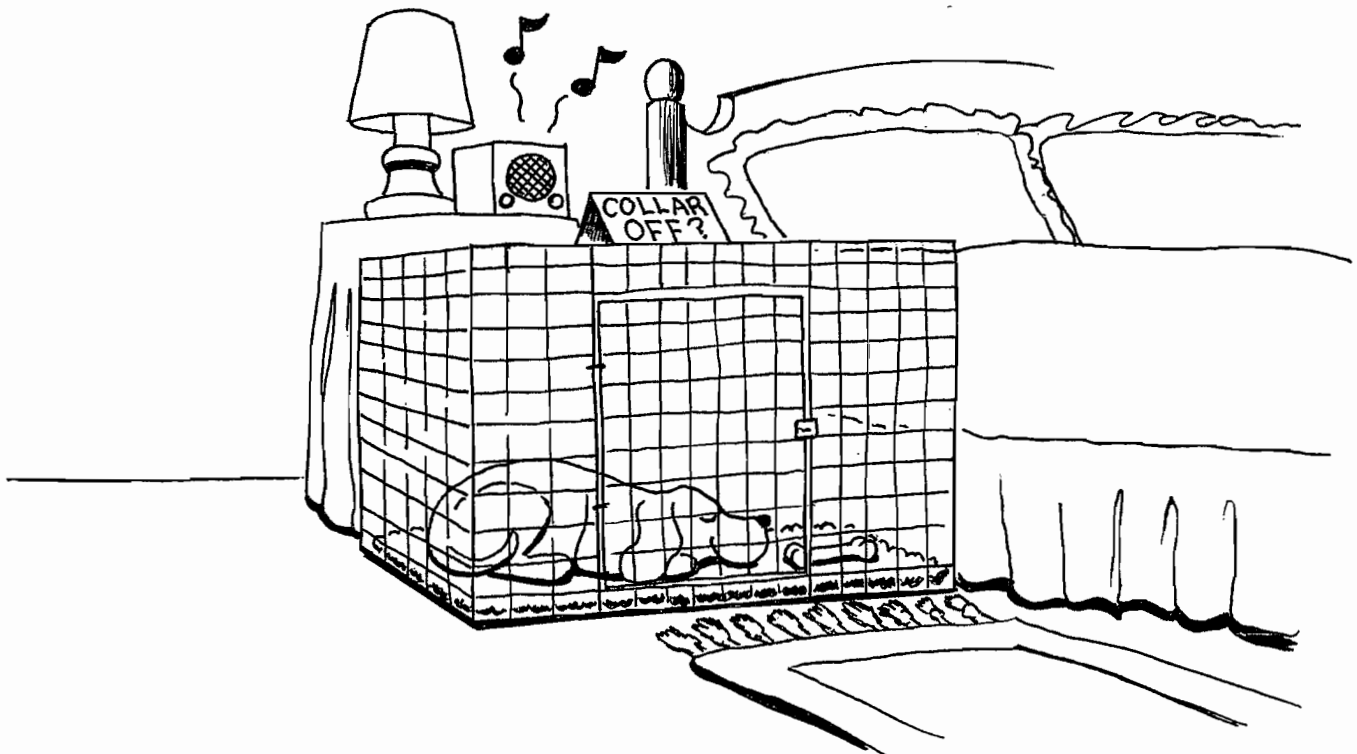
The crate should be located someplace where the family congregates. The family room, bedroom, or kitchen are good choices. Dogs are pack animals--they don't like being isolated, so don't put the crate in a lonely corner of the basement or garage.

What to Put in the Crate

A covered foam crate pad or bed is not a good idea for a puppy in a crate. Puppies love to chew and dig, and a crate pad or bed most likely will be destroyed. A fleece pad or large, folded towel is a better choice. Some dogs prefer the cool metal floor of the crate, especially on warm days. Never put newspapers in the crate--you're trying to encourage the dog not to go there. Put a towel between the floor and crate to keep it from rattling when the pup steps in. Leave a couple of safe chew toys (such as sterilized bones you buy at the pet shop) in the crate.



Say a word such as "crate" as you coax the dog into his crate. You eventually can teach him to enter on command.



The crate keeps your dog safe and out of trouble when you're not there to supervise.

Introducing the Crate

- The first step is to get the puppy to go in and out of the crate without fear. One good way to do this is to initially feed the puppy in his crate. Close the door while he's eating and immediately take him out when he's done.
- When your puppy is sleepy and ready for a nap, put him in his crate.
- Use a treat to coax your puppy into his crate. Shut the door for brief periods of time. Praise him and give him treats while he's being good. Gradually start leaving the room and returning after a few moments.
- Do not let a dog out of his crate while he's barking or whining. You'll be rewarding that noisy behavior and teaching him the wrong thing.
- As you coax the puppy into his crate with a treat or his food, say a word such as "kennel" or "crate" so you can teach him to go in on command.
- Even an adult, crate-trained dog will love to find an occasional "surprise treat" left in the back of his crate. This helps keep the crate a special place.

Summary

Crate training your dog can keep him safe and out of trouble when you're not there to supervise. A crate, used humanely and introduced properly, can become a refuge--a safe place--for your dog. It makes your life, and his, easier and better. Crate training is one of the best tools in housetraining a puppy. Once you've raised a puppy with a crate, you won't want to raise another without one.

Crate Training Dos and Don'ts

Dos

Use a crate to help you housetrain your puppy

Use a crate to keep your dog safe and out of trouble.

Exercise your dog before and after he's spent time in the crate.

Place the crate where people are: the family room, kitchen, or bedroom are good choices.

Introduce the crate gradually. Initially feed a puppy in the crate. Use treats to coax the puppy into the crate as you say a word like "crate."

Leave a couple of safe, indestructible chew toys in the crate with your puppy.

Hide occasional "surprise treats" in the back of the crate.

Don'ts

Don't leave a puppy in a crate for longer than four hours at a time during the day.

NEVER, EVER leave a collar on a dog in a crate.

Don't leave an adult dog in a crate longer than a work day (about eight hours)

Don't isolate the crate in a lonely corner of the basement or garage.

Don't let kids poke at or bother a dog in his crate.

Don't leave anything that your dog could rip up or destroy in the crate.

Don't let your dog out of his crate when he's crying, whining, or barking.