



Peninsula Humane Society & SPCA

# Cratetraining & Creating Your Puppy's Schedule

The most efficient and effective method for both housebreaking and fundamental behavior modification is cratetraining. The crate becomes the dog's "safe" place where she can't make a mistake and get into trouble. *The crate is never used for punishment or isolation.* If the crate is used correctly, a dog should choose to spend time in her crate because she looks at being in her crate as a positive experience.

Crates are either molded plastic or metal wire. Both have advantages and disadvantages. Many metal crates can be folded up for easy storage while the plastic crates can be taken apart, but the two pieces are bulky. Metal crates allow a dog to have full vision since it is wire on all sides and the top. Plastic crates are more confining with one door and three small wire openings. Some dogs are more comfortable feeling more confined, while others prefer feeling more open. Since it is possible that a dog will use her crate for life, it is important that she feel good about her crate. Just a couple of more points about the two types of crates: wire crates can tend to be noisy when the dog is inside, plastic crates are the approved container for animals traveling aboard commercial airlines. The type of crate you choose is personal preference.

Cratetraining follows specific rules. First, an adult dog should not be crated for longer than 5 hours, except at night. For puppies, the time is less and is based on age and level of bowel and bladder control. If the crate is being used for housebreaking, the crate should only be large enough for the dog to stand up, lie down and turn around. If you are dealing with a puppy, you can buy one crate that will be appropriate for the puppy when she is an adult. The back part of the crate can then be blocked off with a box so the puppy will only have access to the front area. The area needs to be small so the puppy will not eliminate in one end of the crate and lay down at the other end. Most puppies do not want to sit or lay in

their own eliminations. The crate should be moved around the house wherever family members might be, so the dog or puppy will not feel banished when they are in their crate. Remember, it is essential that the dog look at being in their crate as a positive experience.

## Using a crate for housebreaking

One thing that will help with the whole housebreaking process is to know your dog's elimination schedule. It is impossible to do this if you free-feed a dog. The dog needs to be fed at specific times of the day. When you know your dog's schedule you can take her outside when you know it is time for her to eliminate and praise her for doing so. If the dog does not eliminate, she needs to go into her crate and not have free run of the house. She needs to be taken out every 15-20 minutes until she has eliminated. If she eliminates, she may have freedom in the house, but it is always best to have the dog in the same room with you so you can supervise them. If you can't supervise her, she should be in her crate so she can't make a mistake.

## Using a crate for behavior modification

To change unwanted behaviors (i.e. destructive chewing), a crate needs to be used to confine the dog when she can't be supervised. If an owner works 8-10 hours a day, crating is not the answer since a dog cannot be crated that long. The dog should be placed in the crate for short periods of time when everyone in the house is gone. When someone is home to supervise the dog, the dog should be left out of the crate so she has an opportunity to explore. She should always be in a room with someone who can supervise her. Her supervisor needs to be aware of any objects that she might pick up. If the object in her mouth is acceptable she should be praised, if it is not acceptable she should be told NO in a firm voice. After she has dropped the object, wait for a few seconds and then give her something that is acceptable for her to chew on: a tennis ball, squeaky



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toy, Kong, rope toy or sterilized bone. When she starts to chew on an acceptable item she should be praised

If the behavior that you are trying to modify is the dog jumping on the furniture, the crate will be used the in the same way. When she cannot be supervised she will need to be in her crate. If a family member can supervise her she should be out of her crate. If she starts to jump on a piece of furniture, she should

be told NO and squirted in the face with water. She'll learn that jumping on the furniture is unacceptable and that her place is on the floor.

The key to changing any behavior is consistency. If a dog is corrected each time she exhibits a behavior, she will soon learn not to do that particular behavior. If she's consistently praised for a behavior, she will want to participate in that behavior.

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### Your Puppy's Schedule & Development

#### *Under 3 months*

- feed 4 times a day
- establish schedule for activities repeated on a daily basis (meals, exercise, training)
- will urinate and defecate at will - lack of muscle control
- crating for no more than 2 hours - will start housebreaking process
- will miss interaction with mother and littermates
- require handling and socialization to help bond them to family members
- should not be left alone more than 2-3 hours

#### *3 - 4 months old*

- feed 3 times a day
- continue to adhere to schedule
- beginning to gain more muscle control
- may be crated for up to 3 hours
- beginning to feel like part of the family
- need for exercise in addition to socialization
- excellent time to start formal obedience training
- need soft, medium and hard toys for teething and chewing
- should not be left alone more than 3-4 hours

#### *4 - 6 months old*

- feed 3 times a day
- expand scheduled activities
- continues to gain more muscle control usually housebroken
- may begin to seek higher position in family pack
- continuing need for exercise, socialization and training
- mouthing behaviors - usually begin to assert dominance
- should not be left alone more than 4-5 hours

#### *6 months to 1 year*

- feed 2 times a day
- scheduled activities will remain important entire life
- maximum crate time - 5 hours
- may be left alone for 6 or more hours based specific behavior and habits of animal

**For more info, call our free Behavior Helpline (650/340-7022 x783 or, for Spanish, x786) or consider a low-cost consultation. To make a consultation appointment, call 650/340-7022 x667. The PHS/SPCA Behavior Department, like many shelter programs, is funded by donations.**