

Northern Oaks
Bird & Animal Hospital

Crate Training

Made Easy

A crate serves many purposes for a puppy:

- Confines your puppy to prevent damage to your home from chewing and accidents
- Provides a natural, safe den for your puppy to nap in
- Confines your puppy while he's riding in the car
- Prevents exposure of your puppy to toxins or household dangers
- Provides a great way to regulate your puppy's schedule for housetraining

When selecting a crate, purchase one that your puppy will be able to stand in as an adult with only enough room to stand up, turn around, and lie back down. If your puppy will be exceptionally large as an adult, consider blocking off a portion of the crate to make it cozier for your puppy. The goal is to make the space tight enough that your puppy cannot urinate in one end and get away from it to sleep in the other. Naturally, dogs will avoid soiling the area in which they sleep.

When first introducing your puppy to the crate, allow your puppy to wander in and out. Once your puppy is comfortable with the crate, confine him for short periods of time while you are out of his line of vision. When you come back in the room open the crate door and immediately take your puppy outside. **Stay outside with him until he eliminates** and then praise him lavishly. It is very important that your puppy eliminates **EVERY TIME** he goes out so that it gives an opportunity to teach what you are asking of him. In order to do so, **you must accompany your puppy outside every time and stay until he goes**, whether that is 5 minutes or 55 minutes. Your puppy should go into the crate any time he will be out of your line of vision. Never use the crate as punishment. When inside the house, **keep your puppy in eyesight at all times**. One suggestion is to leash your dog to your belt loop so your hands are free but your puppy cannot wander off while you cook, wash dishes, do homework, etc.

Take him outside **until he eliminates** immediately before placing him in the crate for the night. Take him out again as soon as you awaken in the morning. When you return inside, feed him, then take him outside again 10 minutes later as feeding will stimulate the need to defecate. He will likely cry the first night or two, but resist the temptation to let him out. Answering the cry will reinforce the crying behavior by rewarding it. He will soon learn the routine if you let him out as soon as you get home, enter the room, or wake up in the morning and he will begin to view the crate as a safe haven.

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Do's and Don'ts

Do's:

- Do buy a crate large enough for your dog's adult size. If the crate is too big, the pup may eliminate in one end and sleep in the other end. Divider panels or a box will solve this problem.
- Do **always** remain outside with your pup **until** he eliminates so that you can praise him for going appropriately. A puppy does not know what you are asking of him when he goes outside without your praise.
- Do provide soft washable bedding to make the crate cozy.
- Do take your puppy out every 30-45 minutes during the training period if he is not crated.

Don'ts:

- Don't let your pup out of the crate because he cries. This trains him that he gets out every time he cries.
- Don't leave your pup in the crate all day. Pups 6 weeks old can last 4 hours during the day, 8 weeks old - 5 hours, 12 weeks old - 6 hours, 5-6 months – 8-10 hour workdays.
- Don't use housebreaking pads in the crate or the house. These train him to eliminate in the house, a very difficult habit to break.
- Don't let your pet roam the house unsupervised. Until he is trained, he must always remain in eyesight so you can usher him outside and praise him for eliminating appropriately. A leash can be attached to your waist.
- Don't punish your pet by forcing him into his crate for negative behavior. It should never be a punishment to go into the crate.