

Early Training - *Crate Training*

Crates are the cribs and playpens of dog training. They:

- Prevent your dog from chewing and soiling the house.
- Protect dogs from consuming things in the house that could be harmful to him.
- Calms anxious dogs.
- Teaches hyperactive dogs to sleep when left alone.
- Are a home away from home whenever you are traveling with your dog.

Correctly used, your dog will regard the crate as a 'room of his own.' It is a clean, comfortable, safe place to leave your dog when he cannot be supervised. It is invaluable for housebreaking because most dogs will try not to urinate or defecate in the crate.

- Introduce your dog to the crate by placing it in a 'people' area (kitchen or family room). Use an old towel or blanket for bedding. Put your dog's toys and a few treats in the open crate, allowing your dog to come and go as he wishes.
- Feed your dog in the crate with the door closed. Clean up any spills promptly-it's very important for the crate to stay clean. Your dog doesn't need to stay in his crate long, but should get comfortable eating his meal there.
- Put your dog in the crate when he is tired and ready for a nap. As soon as you hear him start to wake up, go to him and take him outside. Do not let him out if he is barking or whining because this will reward him for being noisy.

When training is complete, how long can your dog be left? For young puppies, use this rule of thumb. The time limit should be your puppy's age in months plus one. For example:

- A three-month-old pup should not be crated for more than 4-hours
- A four-month-old pup's limit is 5-hours.
- The self-control of puppies varies, but most usually can hold it overnight by the age of four-months.

The adult dog's self-control is usually great enough that it can be left for eight to nine hours in the crate. But keep in mind that long confinements are likely to present other mental and physical difficulties.

Crate or no crate, any dog consistently denied the companionship it needs is going to be a lonely pet and may still find ways (destructive ways) to express anxiety, depression, and stress.

A dog crate offers many advantages for both of you-the most important being peace of mind when leaving your dog home alone. You'll know that nothing can be soiled or destroyed, and that your dog won't get into anything harmful while you're gone.

See also: [House-Breaking](#)

Connie Cleveland
Dog Trainers Workshop

This series of articles is written by Connie Cleveland of founder of [Dog Trainers Workshop](#) located in South Carolina. Connie is a frequent contributor to Front and Finish and Golden Retriever News. Connie has generously given PSLRA permission to use her articles on our website.

Thank you Connie!