

Crate Training, Toilet Training and Sleep

Crates are brilliant, it is only our conditioned association of bars and prison that makes us think it is not so brilliant. If you introduce a crate as a safe place, your puppy will love it.

5 Advantages to Crate Training

1 Give your puppy a safe quiet place to sleep and rest
Dogs are denning animals and a crate covered with a blanket creates a more natural sleeping environment than a dog basket. Sometimes when puppies get a sensory overload from the environment they will take themselves away, for example if something is worrying them such as visiting children, or noises such as thunder etc., they like to have a place to go that is nice and safe. It is important you recognise when your puppy takes itself away to its crate and why it has done so. You can work towards building more resilience in these situations later. If the puppy is not happy, going into its crate is a good choice; there are another 101 inappropriate ways of dealing with fear, stress and sensory overloads.

2 Support house training
Dogs are naturally clean animals and do not usually soil in their sleeping area. However this is influenced by breed, (some are harder to house train than others), previous experience (what has been happening with the breeder?) and physical capability.

The biggest mistake people make is thinking that if you lock a puppy in its crate they will not toilet until you let them out. This is definitely not true! A puppy has a weak bladder, the urethral sphincter muscle is not yet fully developed which is why they 'leak' when scared or excited, so when they gotta go, they gotta go!

3 Create a safe, and transferable, place to sleep and rest
If, like me, you like to travel and want to be able to take your puppy on holidays,

then a crate is brilliant as it is a transferable, safe and secure place you can take with you. This means your puppy will settle better in different places as going into the crate means time to rest and nothing is going to happen. You can then transfer this learning all over the place.

4 Enable safe and positive learning experiences while alone
A crate and puppy pen are great for keeping puppies safe and learning the right stuff. If you leave a puppy with the freedom of a whole room, there is so much trouble they can get up to as well as danger to find. For example chewing furniture and skirting boards, stealing off work surfaces and eventually jumping on them if big or agile enough, chewing soft furnishings, homework, books, digging up carpets, the list is endless!

A crate and good, sturdy puppy pen means that you can limit what is in the environment and the puppy learns to interact only with what is there, such as dog chews, snuffle mats, Kongs, and other various dog toys. Then, as they get older and can be given the run of a room or house depending on your preference, the puppy has already learned to entertain itself appropriately with appropriate items.

5 Use for time out sessions if house set up does not enable removal from room.
Well you might be a bit shocked by this one, as pretty much everyone you speak to and every book you read will tell you never to use a crate as a punishment. I mostly agree with this but it is a very blanket statement and I prefer to take every dog and every environment into account.

