

Play To Behave's
CRATE TRAINING A PUPPY
Choosing the Right Size and Features

OOPS!

...it was
an accident!





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CRATE TRAINING A PUPPY

Choosing the Size and Features

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Published By:

Play To Behave LLC

30799 Pinetree Road, #120

Pepper Pike, OH 44124

USA

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Published in the United States of America



Introduction

If you've just read the guide, "How to Potty Train A Puppy, Problems & Solutions", you are well on your way to a potty trained puppy unless, of course, you are still struggling with using a crate or which crate to buy! This guide will help you choose the right crate for your puppy and provide a few quick tips on using a crate.

If you didn't get the potty training guide yet, use the following link to download your free copy:

LINK

A crate is a way to confine your puppy and includes anything from a cage to a kennel to an X-Pen (exercise pen). Although in our view, we think of crates as only a place to confine a puppy for training, they actually are important for the life of your puppy. To us, they look like jail. They seem like a place for punishment. But they are not "jail". Instead, think of them as a private bedroom or office for your puppy and you will have a better understanding of how a crate is actually a gift you can give your puppy.

A crate is not only the best and easiest way to potty train your puppy, it also provides security for them and for others, as well as a place for recovery if ill or injured. Whether at home, in the car or on vacation, a crate is invaluable.

"But my puppy HATES the crate!"

If this is you, please read the guide and see if it helps to resolve the problem. If not and you are having problems getting your puppy to LOVE the crate then let me help you. Join me in the forums in the Puppy Training Membership and Community and let me know your specific challenges.



Using the Crate

As I write this, my older dog, Pepper is in her 4th week of recovery from tearing her ACL, a ligament in the knee joint. It is the same injury many sports athletes suffer. She has to be crated for 8 weeks and then some. YES, 8 weeks. But because she is used to her crate and loves it, it has not been an issue. This is a sanctuary for her just like your bedroom is for you. It is her personal space where she feels safe and can rest.

Our dogs are also content and quiet in their crates when workers are here, when we throw a party and when people visit that either don't like dogs or are allergic to them. I honestly don't know how people have dogs without crating them! So it is important to help your puppy value her crate.

Know that overall, giving your puppy a small enclosure he loves where he feels safe and can rest is a gift.

Your puppy should have access to their crate for life. If your puppy does not love their crate, there are ways to change that. The details of those methods are beyond the scope of this guide so I will have to cover that elsewhere. You can always find me in the membership forum to get help with these challenges, but you may find all you need in this guide.

A few tips on crating your puppy:

Tip #1:

Clients often tell me that they only have their puppy in a crate when they leave the house or at night. This is a big mistake. I know they mean well. They feel badly putting their puppy in "jail". But it isn't jail! If you only put them in the crate at those times then the puppy associates the crate with loneliness and boredom. Not good.

Instead, use the crate *at* random times and for random *amounts* of time so your puppy will not associate it with separation from you or others. By randomizing the times and amount of time, when your puppy goes in the crate, they won't know or care how long they will be in there.

Tip #2:

Incorporate the crate into fun things you and your puppy do together. Make it part of a game of fetch, training skills, meal time and with toys or chew items.



Tip #3:

Your puppy can be active in the crate with a toy or chew item, be resting or just be observing activity around them while they themselves remain calm. If this is not true for your puppy then you will need to take steps to get there. Avoid using the crate if it will be a bad experience.

Tip #4:

When you put your puppy in the crate because of a problem behavior such as nipping or chewing, do it without emotion and instead treat the action as if you just realized they need some time to rest. Act approach this the same as when you put a box of cereal in the cupboard. The message is not of punishment or reward, just matter-of-fact, "I see you need some time to rest or be alone."



Choosing and Using A Crate

Potty Training

To potty train your puppy, you want to avoid accidents or they may get into a bad habit. The right size crate does not give your puppy enough room to stay clean if they have an accident and therefore, helps prevent them. Its incredibly helpful when:

- you can't watch your puppy with 100% focus
- you can't tie them to your waist or ankle for supervision
- they aren't on the other end of a leash
- they aren't outside in the yard or whatever potty area you want them to use

❖ CRATES SHOULD BE EMPTY

- A puppy pad, towel or even a mat will absorb urine just like a diaper so your puppy won't be as discouraged from having an accidents. So leave those out. It's also a risk because your puppy may chew and swallow those items.
- Know that most crates have some cushion to the bottom so they are more comfortable than you may realize. For example, a wire crate usually has a removable tray that sits just above the floor. There is a little "give" to it.
- In closed-type kennels, they often have the center of the crate bottom raised a little higher than the sides so it too has some "give" for comfort. Look for this when you buy your crates, but if not, your puppy should still be fine.

They will be just fine without these things and many actually prefer it clear because they can get too hot with a mat in the crate

Prevent Anxiety

Separation anxiety is one of the most difficult behaviors to live with and to treat. Puppies and dogs can become incredibly destructive damaging your molding, cabinets and more when they go into a full panic attack because you are gone. Once they develop this problem, many times, even a strong metal crate won't keep them confined and during their escape, they are often injured.



Using the crate at random times of the day, when you are both home and not home and for random amounts of time, will help your puppy believe that time in the crate is positive and has nothing to do with your absence.

It isn't always possible to prevent separation anxiety and some personalities as well as rescues are at a higher risk. But even so, you can at least minimize the problem by providing the crate as a place that your puppy feels safe and secure, so when you do leave, he will be less anxious. Using the crate in a way that provides your puppy with a positive and secure feeling instead of the negative association that the crate = your disappearance for long periods of time is best.

Use Multiple Crates!

Make crate training easy! It's much easier to make the crate a positive place for your puppy if they are located in the places you spend the most time. It also provides for your puppy's social needs because it is easier to spend more time together. That means you will need to have several crates.

❖ **HAVE A CRATE AVAILABLE FOR:**

- The areas of the house you spend the most time in to make training easy for you and providing your puppy with their social needs
- A secluded area in your home where your puppy can be separated from you and others if you have workers in your home or when friends or family visit that don't care for or are allergic to puppies and/or dogs.
- The car for safety. It is a common mistake to have your puppy or dog loose in the car.

Puppies and dogs are often lost or hurt when there is a car accident. That is a heartbreaking experience that you can avoid. Your dog can also be in danger during an accident or even a traffic stop if the emergency medical workers, fireman or police can't get to you. They will not take the time to catch your puppy or calm them down. If they feel threatened, they will respond accordingly. Not good!

- Travel and Events: If you need to stay in a hotel, at someone's house, go camping or travel to show your dog, you will want a portable crate easy to move and set up.



- ❖ **HAVING CRATES ALL OVER YOUR HOUSE DOES NOT NEED TO BE PERMANENT!** Once your puppy is potty trained and out of the chewing stages, you may be able to leave them loose in the house for extended periods, even when you are gone. At that point, having just one crate in your house and one for the car should be enough. That will give your dog a place they can call their own and it will be available when you need it for safety or other reasons.
- ❖ **COST:** If cost is an issue, consider second hand ones or less expensive models. There is an incredible range of crates available on the market!

Make It Easy To Use

There are lots of crates to choose from on the market that vary in size, weight, ease of use and more. See below for more specifics on different types of crates to consider.

Prevent An Escape

Quality and cost vary but that doesn't mean the more expensive crate is the safer crate. You will need to be a smart shopper. The crate should be difficult to open for a toddler and yes, your puppy! They can be very clever or in the case of a low quality door clasp, it can easily break or open. They should also stay "locked" in the event of an accident in your car. A "double" lock is best; meaning one that requires two actions to open. Some will accommodate extra locks which you may want if putting your dog on a flight.

Choose The Right Size

This depends on how you will use your crate.

- ❖ **Potty Training:** The crates should be large enough for the puppy to turn around and to lay down to rest. They should also be able to stand with their head held up. Slightly smaller than this is fine. Larger ones risk more accidents.



Note that you can buy some crates for your puppy's expected size as an adult. These crates come with partitions that allow you to increase the space as your puppy grows. Many wire crates offer this feature.

- ❖ When Left for Longer Periods of Time: Once they can be trusted to keep the crate clean, you could try a larger crate or an X-Pen if you like, but it isn't necessary to have more space.
- ❖ For Use in the Car: A crate used in the car or for other travel, should be a bit smaller to reduce the chance of getting hurt by moving inside the crate in the case of an accident.
 - In this size, the puppy can turn around and lay down, but may not be able to stretch their legs out. They can also sit but their head would not touch the top of the crate.
 - You will also need to consider how it will fit in your car. Don't forget to measure between wheel wells, the height inside and the actual opening to the rear and/or door of the car. Also note any slope if your car is a hatchback.

Different Types and Features

- ❖ **WIRE:** I have quite a few wire crates. Most of mine are either Precision or Midwest brands. They have two features to lock and I prefer having two doors. Some are very heavy and I *don't* love that although they are probably safer. Their height and width have been an issue in my car when I need to bring two.
 - Locks and Safety: These are strong crates making them safer because it's less likely your dog will get out and may be more protective in a car accident (depending on the type of crate). Locks vary and it's best to have a "two-lock" system in which two movements must be made to open the door. This makes the crate safer because you are less likely to leave it open and because your puppy will have a harder time figuring out how to release themselves.
 - Easy Cleaning: Most have a removable tray for easy cleaning and the wire itself is easy to hose or wipe off.
 - Aesthetics: Ones with enamel coating looks nicer and resists rust but also may make the crate heavier.
 - Use and Storage: Most of them are easy to set up and to collapse as one unit for travel and storage, but beware because some models have pins and other removable parts that can be difficult to line up. If



possible, try it out before you buy it. Most also have a handle you can attach for moving.

- Cover: A cover can be if used so that you can cover all or just part of the crate. When I used to take one of my dogs herding, she could be pretty muddy by the time we got back to the car! It was nice to have the option of covering the crate for times like that but also the option to leave parts open for ventilation on a hot day. (I also used some waterproof covering in the back of my car and actually, the car stayed pretty clean!) So, wire is nice because you can control the ventilation and somewhat, the temperature as well.
- Number of Doors: Available with one or two doors which makes placement in your home and car easier. Some have a top door for smaller puppies.
- Versatility: Usually strong enough to allow you to place a piece of wood on top of the wire crate and gain another surface for use.
- Bowls: It's easy to clip metal water and food bowls inside using a standard clip or a carabiner.
- Noise: They are noisy if you have no mat and they are chewing on a bone!
- Training: For crate training and other times when you need to reward in the crate, it is much much easier with a wire crate because you can pass the reward through the crate from any position.
- Size and Color: Many sizes and even colors are available.

❖ **HARD-SIDED KENNELS**: These vary in material, quality, size and more. It is a huge category of dog crates from cheap lightweight plastic with a range of questionable safety features to heavy metal custom crates that are almost indestructible, designed to give in an accident so your dog is more protected and can be locked to prevent not only escape but also theft of your dog. Some are airline approved. There are even wood crates nice enough to be used as an endtable in your living room. You will want to evaluate them based on the same or similar features noted for the wire crates. To understand the difference, I recommend you compare the following crates. (I am NOT an affiliate! Maybe someday!)

- [Ruff Maxx Dog Kennel](#) This is just an example! The link may change. I searched Amazon for a kennel and then filtered the results for low to high cost, hard sided and the size. I have not used this kennel but found it to use as a comparison. It is a typical closed plastic kennel.
 - For this level of cost, consider the reviews and the following:
 - **QUALITY OF MATERIAL**: This one is plastic and I'm not sure of the toughness or weight. If you don't need a tough



kennel then you may opt for a less substantial material because it may weigh less.

- **WEIGHT:** As mentioned, this will matter if you are using this for travel.
 - **COLLAPSABILITY FOR STORAGE AND TRAVEL:** The top can be removed and it fits into the bottom so storage space is less but make sure you look at the bolts used for strength and ease of removal. I saw about a million of these in practice! If the bolts are not strong, they can easily come off. Some got rusty and were nearly impossible to get off. But there were certainly excellent ones. You need to be a smart shopper and know your needs.
 - **LATCHES:** This one has a squeeze latch which can be hard to open on some, so try it out first. Some have a two-part lock system, open only one or both directions and may be made out of plastic or metal. These can be great or make getting your puppy in and out a nightmare!
 - **CLEANING:** If easy to clean and also if the plastic will retain odors
 - **VENTILATION**
 - **SHAPE:** Some are easier to carry than others
 - **NUMBER OF DOORS**
 - **PLACE FOR ATTACHMENTS:** To attach METAL water and/or food bowls (A puppy may chew up plastic.)
 - **SIZE AND COLOR:** Size matters on where you will place the crate This is personal preference of course and depending on how you use it, ie. to take your dog herding or for tracking, whether it will show dirt.
- **[Ruff Tuff Kennels:](#)** I do use one of these and will probably get another one. They are made of UV stabilized polyethylene. I'm not sure what that is but it is incredibly strong but still has give in case of an accident. This makes them safer than a wire crate in the event of a car accident. There are so many positive features that it would be best to just check out the link for comparison. To name a few: they are fairly lightweight, have very safe and easy latches, can be stacked, are narrower than most making it easier to fit two of them side by side in a car or SUV, have handles, offer one or two doors depending on size, and much more. They do have some negatives depending on what you want. They are one piece so not great for storage and are higher in cost than most kennels.



- [Mighty Mite Variocage Kennels](#): I don't have one of these but a good number of my friends have them. They are probably the safest kennel you can and are custom made to fit your car. They are made of steel and have telescopic tubes so they can be sized but also to create a "crumple zone" that helps to protect your dog. They have been crash-tested, can be locked with a key, have an escape hatch and depending on size, can be adjusted to house two dogs separately or together. There are many more features to compare so I suggest you use the link to learn more. It will help you evaluate other crates as well. Two downsides of these crates are the cost and the weight. Because of my kids, I needed to be able to remove the crates often and these are so heavy that I would need help making it inconvenient. But I consider it from time to time and may get them in the future.
- [Furniture Style Crates](#): You can find these on many sites, including Amazon and Frontgate. Some are quite nice to blend in with a more formal room. They can be made from wood or other more friendly materials for easy cleaning. I haven't used them but I know people who have been happy with them. I would look at the same criteria as you would for other crates, especially whether they can be easily cleaned and have enough ventilation.

Again, these are just three types of closed hard kennels to compare and to get you thinking about your own needs. There is much more variety on the market.

- ❖ **SOFT-SIDED KENNELS**: These also vary in material, quality, size and more. Also, like the others, it is a huge category of dog crates from cheap lightweight nylon fabric to heavy canvas with questionable safety features to ones with features that make some safer than others. They are not as strong as the plastic and metal crates and puppies and dogs can get out of them easier than they can the other types but they can be (not always!) less expensive, easier to collapse and store and lighter weight. It is best to read some reviews before buying.
 - Following are some features to consider that differ from the other crates:
 - **SHAPES**: These come in a variety of shapes as well as sizes. Some are tents that come with elaborate awnings and mats while others are a simple box type.
 - **STORAGE**: Some of these can fold down into a very small space and come with a carrying case.



- **COLLAPSIBILITY:** Make sure you take a look at this and it's best to try it out. These can be the most frustrating crates to open and close and vary from type to type. Some have pieces that come apart and others have one part that is low quality and tends to break.
- **MATERIAL:** Fabric may not be acceptable for travel by plane unless in the cabin. These regulations change from time to time so you will need to check but overall, these cannot be used for flying in-cabin.
- **CLEANING:** This depends on the material. Some can be hosed, some laundered and others may not hold up. Fabric can also retain odor and be a problem. However, the fabric can be removed from the frame in some of them and replaced
- **MAT:** These require a mat because there is no separation from the hard floor surfaces. However, some do come with them.
- **SAFETY:** They won't be safe in a car accident but also, if your puppy or dog is a chewer, they may escape and damage the fabric. Sometimes these can be repaired while others will need to be replaced.
- **ZIPPERS:** These are normally used with fabric somewhere. The quality matters. In addition, if you have a double zipper on a door, they can be clasped together for added safety so your puppy won't accidentally cause them to open.
- **MESH:** A mesh fabric is normally used for ventilation. Some are advertised as "claw proof". You'll want to consider based on the amount of netting for ventilation and some offer a zippered cover for the mesh as well.
- **LIGHTWEIGHT:** These can be much lighter in weight than other crates which make them a pleasure for travel. Some have metal frames while others may have heavy plastic or lightweight rods. If showing your dog, you may need to take the crate from home to the car to the show facility to the hotel and back again. You may have to carry it long distances so if your puppy and/or dog learns to stay calm and clean in the crate then these can be great.
- **OTHER STORAGE FEATURES:** Many of these crates offer zippered pouches on the top or sides to store your dog's items and there can be lots of them! You may have much to take to shows or traveling such as treats, toys, cleaning and/or grooming supplies, leashes and more.



- Following are some to compare so you can form a better idea of what you want: (I am not an affiliate for any of these)
 - [PETEGO UMBRA TENT](#): This is a popular tent for dogs because of its claw-proof mesh, ease of set up and collapse, storage space, lightweight and more. I don't have one but I've seen a number at shows. The people who have them, love them. They are pricier but they are high quality with exceptional features. If I get another fabric crate, this is the one I will get. These are available on Amazon and of course, links can change but you have the name now!
 - [NOZ2NOZ SOF-KRATE](#): I have this brand and used to use it all the time. I loved it. I need new covers from all the use and they can be replaced. They have changed over the years. I think one of them had a mostly plastic frame or at least parts of it were plastic that broke. But other ones lasted forever and I still have them. They may be better or worse! But I believe they are a great quality. Check the reviews. The link is for Amazon because they don't sell direct. What I love about these is that they are relatively lightweight, the frame sets up and collapses easily and it's all one piece. Also, the fabric cover can be removed, there are no sharp edges inside to hurt your dog and there are ways to attach a water bucket inside. It does not fold up as small as a tent will so I may get a tent next time.
 - [SHERPA PET CARRIER](#): This is a carrying crate meaning it is meant to travel and be held like a tote bag, although you can get them with wheels. It sort of rounds out a look at the differences in soft-sided crates. It is the best travel crate for puppies and for some small dogs too. It is airline approved for in-cabin travel on most, if not all airlines (regulations change so be sure to check first if you need to use this!). I love that it is soft on the top so you can "hug" your puppy through the fabric and for plane travel, it can be compressed a bit to fit under the seat if needed. It is a gentler way to transport your puppy when you first bring them home. It is lightweight, the mesh is strong and it has a strong handle. Some have wheels. These can be pricey so if you only need it for the first couple weeks then you may want to borrow one or buy one second hand. They are the right size for cats and popular so I think you'll be able to find one.



❖ **EXERCISE PENS AKA “X-PENS”:** X-Pens is short for “exercise pen” and it’s a bit like a playpen for children. It is not really a crate but you may decide you’d rather use one of these or if you don’t have a fenced-in yard, you may want to use it outside. Basically, X-Pens can be judged in much the same way as the crates. They also come in plastic, metal, fabric and wood. My one concern with them is that if the puppy jumps up on the side, some will topple over and your puppy can get hurt.



Want to Know More?

In my membership community, there are video trainings and downloads to help you raise your puppy. There is also a forum where you can have exclusive contact with me and make connections with other puppy owners, to ask questions and learn more about this critical time in your puppy's life.

To get more information, sign up for my email list and get special exclusive content to help you raise your puppy, go to playtobehave.com to opt-in or email me at playtobehave@gmail.com and I'll add you to our mailing list. I am careful to send emails that you will find valuable and not to overdo it, but if you ever decide you don't need to get more emails, you can unsubscribe at any time. Plus, I don't share my email list with anyone.

To learn more about the membership and community, go to playtobehavetraining.com for more information.

If you value this guide, I'm so glad! Please don't share it directly but instead, share a link to my website so your friends can download it too. This way, I'll have a better idea of what to create in the future.

I'd love to hear from you with any questions or comments. I'd also like to hear about your puppy! Let me know their name, breed and what you love about him or her. I hope this helps you and I thank you for taking the time to read this book!

Best,
Carolyn



About the Author

Dr. Carolyn Lincoln has been a veterinarian since 1990, competed in dog agility since 2006, taught puppy and dog agility classes since 2009 and been on the Board of the American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior since 2014.

Her love and passion for behavior and dog training led her to open her behavior practice in 2013, although she had been doing behavior medicine throughout her career. Through competition, Dr. Lincoln is proud to have a Championship Australian Shepherd named Pepper that took her to the National level.

At home, Dr. Lincoln lives with her husband of 33 years who has put up with a menagerie of animals over the years! Their four children are in their college years so what was she to do but get another puppy! Learn more about Pepper and Rae through the website and on the Play To Behave Facebook page.

