

Tips for the First Week: Crate Training and Housebreaking

Arriving home:

- Allow your puppy to explore outside your car before they are led into the house. It is a new environment and they should be given time to explore and adjust. Let them choose what to sniff and lead them into the home slowly. Stay relaxed and patient.
- It is best to start the puppy off in a small space-both inside and out. They do not need the freedom of the entire house or yard and will benefit from being introduced slowly. They should have an area where their crate or "place" is and should not be given freedom in the home alone yet. Having a well defined space that they know is theirs is actually a comfort to them.
- Begin to work on establishing a routine or structure that your puppy can follow. They easily adapt to the family's schedule.
- A puppy will chew on almost anything; ensure that the home and yard is secure.

The first night:

- Feed the puppy their last meal, give them time to digest then go outside to relieve and play. If you plan to switch to a different type of feed, be sure to transition the puppy over slowly for about a week by mixing the feeds.
- A puppy may not eat right way, but should eat within the first 24 hours of being taken to a new home.
- Secure your puppy a quiet area that will be their "place" until they are older and can be given more independence. It should be a quiet place but not isolated from the household. A corner of the living room, for instance, could be a good place.
- Whining is normal, especially when the puppy is placed in a crate. It is important to let the puppy figure out how to comfort herself and be in a new situation. Never comfort a whining puppy, it will prolong the adjustment process.
- When crate training, ignore the whining and praise if she is calm, possibly with a chew toy or bone to reward and distract further.
- Puppies will pick up on your emotions-stay calm and assertive.
- You will most likely need to let the puppy out once during the night for the first few weeks until the puppy is able to hold their bladder for extended periods. Puppies may experience soft stool for up to three days

Crate Training:

- Canine species are den animals-they derive a feeling of security from having a place of their own.
- The crate is the dog's very own spot and will keep him from causing trouble when he cannot be supervised. A blanket or towel is a good bedding for the crate.
- The first experience with the crate should be a pleasant experience.
- Leave the crate open and let the puppy explore. Lure them further in with treats.
- Feeding the puppy in the crate to encourage them to enter the crate. Be sure feedings are several hours before bedtime, however.
- When they are comfortable in the crate, shut the door for a few minutes. If they are calm and quiet, let them out and repeat the process. Gradually increase the time in the crate.
- The puppy will likely whine-do not reward the puppy's behavior by opening the door.
- Punishment is not necessary, but do remain firm. There should not be any negative connections with their bed.
- If you are occupied, place the puppy back in their crate with some toys until you are able to supervise again.
- A radio playing on low can be used as background noise.

-Crate training is an effective way to prevent separation anxiety. Stress of abandonment causes dogs to be destructive but a properly crate trained dog will seldom panic at being alone.

Night time suggestions:

- A puppy starts to feel safe and secure when he knows what's expected of him and when he will be fed, walked, put to bed, and left alone. Set up a daily schedule with fixed times and stick to it as much as possible.
- Be sure to tire out your puppy before you prepare for going into the crate.
- Lead the puppy into the crate, using a treat or toy if necessary. Let the dog go in willingly instead of being pushed in. They should feel safe in their den, not fear it or see it as a place of punishment. In our experience, however, there are times that we have needed to gently put them into the crate after coaxing has failed.
- Feeding the puppy in the crate can be a way to get the puppy into the crate during the daytime. Puppies should not be fed just before bedtime.
- Make sure to use a cue word that the puppy learns to associate with going into the crate.
- If the puppy is distressed, stay poised and calm. The puppy needs to learn to solve the problem and get past her anxiety on her own. Running to comfort will lead to a nervous, fearful, dependent puppy.
- By the second night, the whining should have decreased as the puppy finds comfort in her new owners and the more familiar surroundings. The puppy will begin to pick up on the family's sleep patterns and mimic them.

Housetraining:

- Puppies respond well to routine and have predictable bowels.
- Your puppy should be fed 3-4 times a day and will need to relieve themselves within 5-30 minutes of eating.
- Take the puppy outside before naps and after the puppy wakes.
- Until your puppy has been housebroken, be sure to use the same location and same door/pathway to the location you want your puppy to relieve in. Once the smell is there, it will remind him to go in that place again. The consistency will help the puppy learn where they are expected to go and which door to go to.
- Remember your own energy. If you are nervous, or impatient it can stress a puppy and make them shut down.
- Again, puppies will pick up on your energy. It should not be a stressful event.
- Puppies may need to be encouraged to go out into the yard, especially if it is wet or cold. Encourage them to go out and give them time to become comfortable and pick a spot.
- Use a cue word for going out to relieve and be sure to praise the puppy when they go in the correct spot. Positive energy and your satisfaction can be a powerful motivator. It doesn't have to be loud and excited. It can simply be quiet approval.
- If the puppy has an accident, do not yell or become upset, calmly correct and show the puppy where they should go to relieve. Accidents early on are part of the process. Don't get frustrated, staying patient is the best path to success. Remain calm and assertive.
- Be sure to remove all scents in an area after an accident has occurred. The puppy should not be able to smell the urine or feces in that location or they may associate it with a place to go. I use a diluted vinegar spray to neutralize the smell.

Housetraining with a Crate:

- Morning: Let the puppy out of the crate and immediately carry them to the designated bathroom spot.
- If the puppy has an accident in the crate at night-do not scold them. Try adjusting your schedule to getting up a few minutes earlier if possible. Be sure that the puppy has gone to the bathroom before they are put into the crate. Removing the water dish earlier is also helpful. The goal is to prevent the accident, not punish.

- Using a leash is a good way to stay near the puppy and encourage them to stay in the area you want them to use.
- Use the term you have designated to mean relieving themselves and reward the puppy if they go in the designated area.
- After they have relieved themselves, allow the puppy to play before feeding. Place out food and water and allow the puppy to eat for 15-20 minutes then remove the dishes.
- Repeat the process of taking the dog back to the elimination spot. If they are not interested, do an activity then go back again. It is very important to be there to praise the puppy if they eliminate.
- Watch for sniffing and anxious behavior-this likely means it is time to head to the elimination spot.
- If you are consistent and respond quickly to the cues, the process will proceed successfully.
- It is very important to prevent the puppy making a "mistake." If they cannot be supervised, they should be in their crates.

House Proofing:

- Check for loose wires or cords, small items a dog may pick up and chew. Make sure food is put away and cabinets are secure, garbage is covered.
- Put all chemicals in secure locations, make sure houseplants are out of reach. Secure areas like pools and hot tubs.
- Outdoors: Check for any poisonous plants: Autumn crocus, castor bean, foxglove, hibiscus, hyacinth, Japanese yew, jerusalem cherry, larkspur, lily of the valley, morning glory, nightshade, oleander, Trumpet vine, tulips, wisteria.

Resources:

- <https://www.thelabradorsite.com/crate-training-your-labrador-puppy/>
- <http://critterclinicboise.com/clients/11348/documents/Puppy%20Pack%20Sheets/Housebreaking%20Made%20Easy.pdf>
- <https://www.cesarsway.com/dog-care/puppies/Potty-training-a-puppy>
- http://www.humanesociety.org/animals/dogs/tips/crate_training.html
- <http://www.akc.org/content/dog-training/articles/how-to-crate-train-a-puppy/>
- <http://www.vetstreet.com/our-pet-experts/7-trainer-approved-puppy-housebreaking-tips>