

have some anxiety at first so it's best to give them something to work their anxiety out on rather than the bedding.

Another thing to remember is that dogs are very social animals. So crate training is easiest when you have another dog crated next to your new puppy. It is comforting for them to have company and a nice calm adult dog is a great influence on a young puppy. If you do not have another dog, you will probably want to crate your puppy right next to your bed at first.

Most new puppies will bark quite a bit as they are initially crated. It is important to keep in mind that a puppy's reaction is dependent on the way that the breeder raised the puppies. Some breeders are really good about confining puppies to smaller spaces at night so they are used to confinement and only need to get used to being alone (or with another adult dog as opposed to several other puppies). Other breeders are not doing you any favors when they let puppies run loose in a yard or a garage all of the time. Breeders should work very hard to make sure that their pups are used to having some room to roam and explore, but yet are acclimated to being confined in small kennels or crates for periods of time before they leave for their new homes. I have had puppies from both kinds of breeders and pups that have been confined in some way are MUCH easier to crate-train and house-break. However crate-training goes, please do not get upset with your puppy. He/she is not struggling because he/she is unintelligent or too needy or any other long-term issue. Puppies are products of their environment and if you provide the right one, they will respond favorably with time. It just takes more time if they have not been provided the ideal environmental to succeed in before.

There are basically two different ways to crate-train your dog. There is the "slow-warning" method and the "bark-it-out" method. We have tried both and they each have their pros and cons. If you go to work during the day, you will likely have to use the "bark-it-out" method during the day. So I have concentrated on describing crate-training at night below.

"Slow-Weaning" Crate Training Method

This is likely the best method if your new puppy is the only dog in the house. You will start by crating the puppy right next (within arm's reach) to someone's bed. If the pup barks or whines, you hit the top of her crate. But do not say anything. We want the pup to think that the crate is responding to his/her crying, not a person. We do not want pup to think that you are the bad guy. Plus, raising your voice is more likely to get the pup worked up rather than calm him/her dog so we try to avoid using our voice in this instance. Most pups hate the crate shaking so they quit barking after you hit it a few times while they are barking. If that does not dissuade the puppy, you can also throw some pennies in an empty can and tape the lid shut. The next time the puppy barks in the crate, bang that can of pennies on top of her crate. That sound is really loud and annoying to a puppy. So they usually figure out fairly quickly to quit barking in their crate to avoid it. Once the pup is quietly going into the crate every night, you can move it further and further away from the bed over a period of time. I personally do not like to have dogs sleeping in the same room with me. Even the most well-mannered dog will wake you up by scratching an itch or licking themselves. In addition, I think it is better for the dog to be comfortable enough in a crate that you do not need to be nearby. Your pup is going to be crated alone while you are at work. And he/she may be alone when you are on the road or asking someone to dog-sit your dog. Your pup is much more likely to have a sound and balanced temperament as an adult if he/she is comfortable being crated alone in the back of a truck or alone in a different room of the house.

The advantage to this method is that the puppies usually sleep more through the first couple of nights. You stop their barking early and often with the noise on the top of the crate. And you are nearby as well so the pup can be calmed merely by your presence. The disadvantage to this method is that it usually takes longer before the pup is slowly weaned off of your presence and can be crated quietly in another room. It can take anywhere from 1-2 weeks before you can reliably crate the puppy in another room and expect him/her to lay quietly in there until the following morning.

“Bark-It-Out” Crate Training Method

For this method, you place the crate wherever you would like it to remain long-term. After you crate the puppy at night, you will just walk away and leave him/her alone (or crated next to another dog). It can be really difficult to sleep through a puppy barking. At our house, we crate the dogs in my office on the main level but then sleep upstairs. Unfortunately, our bedroom is right above my office so I can hear the barking quite obviously. For our latest pup, we used this method and just cranked up the TV volume in our bedroom the first couple of nights to drown out the puppies' barking. Perhaps you are lucky enough to crate your dogs in another part of the house where you do not hear the barking.

The disadvantage to this method is that you could have a few sleepless nights if you are not able to sleep through the puppy barking. But the advantages to this method are that you are not risking scaring the puppy by pounding on the crate and it usually works quicker. To give you an idea of the timeline, I will share my experience with my latest pup, Anna. Anna spent 13 hours on a plane and 5 hours in a car to arrive at our house from Germany. We got home at about 11pm and tried to go to bed at midnight. Anna barked the entire night save for 2 hours between about 3 and 5am. On night two, she barked all night except for 4 hours. On night three, she barked for a half hour initially, but then was quiet for 7 hours before barking at 5am. On her fourth night with us, she only barked for 5 minutes before sleeping quietly for 9 hours! And even then, I chose to let her out. She was laying quietly when I opened her crate so I am not sure how long I could have slept in before she started to bark. I would also add the caveats that I have been home all day, every day with her since she arrived so she had not been crated during the day at all. These night-time cratings are the only practice she has gotten. And being from Germany, I suspect that part of the reason the first night was so tough was because of the time difference and the stress of the long flight. Most pups do not look favorably upon crates after being confined in one filled with their own urine for 13 straight hours. But after just 4 days of only being crated at night, she was used to the routine and trusted that we would let her out in the morning so there was no need to get all worked up. For the next few nights, she only whimpered a little for a few minutes immediately after being crated. By the time she had been here a week, she was resting quietly in her crate all night until whatever time in the morning I chose to let her out.

Separation Anxiety Prevention

One thing I will need to work on with my new pup is crating her during the day. Even though I work from home and do not need to crate her during the day, it is important that your dog is used to being crated even while you are up and moving around the house. There are times when you cannot supervise your pup even if you are home. And pups are more likely to develop issues with separation anxiety if they are never separated from you until they are older. I know of one particular retired friend who is now paying the price for keeping his dog with him all of the time when he was a puppy. He cannot kennel the dog alone now without the dog freaking out (barking until there is foam in the mouth, getting paws bloody trying to dig out, etc.). So please, practice crating your dog during the day even if you are home.

If nobody will be home during the day, you can implement the “Bark-It-Out” method. But if you are home during the day, you can start day-crating by just putting your pup in a crate for 5 minutes at a time. Give him/her a treat when you put the pup in the crate and walk away. Go into another room and keep yourself occupied. If the pup barks, do NOT say anything. When we yell at a dog barking, they interpret that as you joining in to bark with them. It raises their excitement level rather than calming them down. So as hard as it may seem, say nothing and wait until the pup stops barking before entering the room to let them out of the crate. At first, you may to race in during a couple of seconds when the pup is catching his/her breath. But with practice, the pup should get better and better and laying quietly in the crate until you choose to let him/her out. You simply extend the period of time that the pup is crated as pup gets more and more comfortable with the situation.

General Crate-Training Tips

One thing we do with our personal dogs that seems very effective is to take our time when we get home before letting them out of their crates. Many dogs are totally fine being crated all day but they start barking in excitement as soon as they hear the front door open because they know they will be let out soon. So we purposely put stuff away or get a glass of water right when we walk in. These actions further reinforce the idea that we decide when to let the dogs out. They are still excited to come out and greet us, but they are quiet until we open the crate because they cannot anticipate the exact timing when we will do it. You will find that dogs are often apt to try to anticipate when you might say or do something and that they will “jump the gun”. It is their nature. They have an innate desire to please and puppyish enthusiasm that will last their whole life. It is what makes them easy to train...but sometimes their enthusiasm overrides their ability to perform as trained. So little things like mixing up the timing of when you open a crate can manipulate them into being obedient a little longer.

Regardless of the method you use to crate train your dog, it is important to remember a couple of other key factors to help the crate-training process go smoothly. The best thing that you can do is thoroughly exercise your puppy immediately before you crate him/her. Most people get new puppies at 8-10 weeks of age and you should start crate-training immediately (because dogs are creatures of habit and any training you delay will only make it harder to train later on). So luckily, it is not too difficult to wear out a young puppy. Just walking the puppy a couple hundred yards is a big workout for the pup. Playing fetch or chase in the yard for at least 15 minutes would also be pretty effective. And then of course you want to end the training session by making sure that your puppy has urinated and defecated. It is definitely best to crate a puppy with nothing in the tank, so to speak. Dogs/puppies naturally try to avoid going to the bathroom near where they sleep. Puppies should see their crate as a refuge and that is not possible if they are confined in a urine-soaked blanket. If you are using the “bark-it-out” method, you need to especially sure that your pup is emptied out before crating him/her for the night.

On a similar note, do not feed your puppy (besides a small treat) right before you plan to crate him/her. You can ignore this rule when the puppy is older and has more control over bowel movements. But for young puppies, feed them breakfast as soon as they are up so they have some time for the meal to settle before you leave for work. And then feed them an early dinner (we usually feed dinner around 5:30pm) and give them time for their stomachs to settle again before crating them. I would also not recommend you watering your puppy at least an hour before you plan to crate him/her. It is hard for a pup to sleep quietly all night with a full bladder. We make sure that puppies urinate before crating them, but we can help them out further by limiting their liquid intake prior to crating.

You might consider playing a radio near the pup’s crate when they are in it. Just hearing human voices can often soothe a pup and lull them into sleep. I know several people who even leave the radio playing in their kennels or garage for adult dogs. It is certainly worth trying for your puppy if he/she is still struggling. Personally, I do not typically play a radio as my dogs are on the road a lot with me and I do not know if there will be music available to play at each of our destinations. So I choose to skip this tip so I do not acclimate the dogs to something that I cannot always replicate. But sometimes you have to try something different if nothing else is working so I am including this tip in case you need it.

Crating in the Car

By the time you have gone through all of the effort to crate-train your new puppy in the house, it is usually a very quick and easy transition to crating your pup in the car. But it is different so I want to include a little advice for transitioning to the crate in the car.

I do not usually use treats when crating pups in the car...pretty much for the same reason why I do not play a radio. I will not always have treats on me when we are traveling. Instead, I just try to build up the pup’s trust that a car ride always means something fun. Start with short drives (maybe only 5 or 10 minutes) where you go to a park or a wildlife area. You can even bring a bird for the pup to point/chase. Once the pup is traveling well on these shorter trips, extend the distance, but always have a fun destination in mind for the puppy. If you have

to take the puppy to the vet, that may not be so fun for the puppy. Go to Tractor Supply Company or PetSmart (stores that allow you to bring your puppy inside) afterwards so that the puppy still has something fun to associate with the car ride. I have yet to meet a puppy that was not excited to meet new people and walk down aisles of dog treats 😊

Whining/barking in the crate in the car is just as unacceptable as whining/barking in the crate in the house and should not be tolerated. It is most common when the vehicle is parked. The dogs figure that the truck is stopped so you should let them out immediately. But you cannot always let them out right away. You will be traveling to training days, hunt tests, hunting, etc. and there will be times when you have to leave your dog in the truck. There are many motels in South Dakota that do not allow dogs into the rooms. So on our big hunting trips there, we usually just leave our dogs crated in the truck all night. If your dog cannot sit quietly in a parked vehicle, your hunting opportunities will be limited and nobody likes that truck in the parking lot that shakes all day with a dog barking while everyone else is trying to train/test. In the VGP (JGHV Master Hunter Test), the judges have no choice but to fail a dog that whines/barks in the truck. A finished gundog is expected to be well-mannered in between individual hunt subjects in addition to during the hunt. Our dogs must learn to relax quietly in their crates in vehicles too.

So again, you need to build up your dog's trust that if he/she is crated in an unmoving, you are still going to let him/her out to do fun stuff. The best thing that you can do is attend local training days put on NAVHDA (North American Versatile Hunting Dog Association) or VDD-GNA (Verein Deutsch Drahthaar-Group North America). At these training days, you will get to work your dog on birds/rabbits, but you will also have to take turns. It will be good for your dog to get used to waiting quietly until it is his/her turn. They will be rewarded with their patience.

If you are unable to attend a training day, you can improvise by setting up scenarios for your dog. Park your truck at the field where you are planning to run your dog but do not let him/her out right away. Walk around the truck a bit first. Talk to a friend. We are not trying to trick the dog into thinking that you are not there to hear him/her but rather training the dog that it really does not matter if you are there or not. They need to be quiet regardless. If they do whine or bark, you can either hit the side of the truck (similar to how you would hit the top of the crate in the "slow-weaning" method) or you can just practice the "bark-it-out" method and walk away until the dog is quiet. Do not let the dog out until he/she is quiet. I am sure you have heard the saying "You cannot teach an old dog new tricks". While this is not necessarily true, there is an element of truth in it. It is much easier to train a puppy something new than it is to train a dog who already has some (bad) habits. So just like regular crate-training, be sure to practice crating in the car with your new puppy as soon as possible. The longer you put it off, the longer it will take to condition the pup to behave appropriately.

Conclusion

Getting a new puppy is always a very exciting time. We have such high hopes for each new prospect that walks through the door. But even the best-bred puppy needs your help to reach his/her full potential. Crate-training is essential to any gundog development. And it makes your life at home much safer and easier as well. We all want our dogs to be good citizens. We all want our dogs to be safe when out of our supervision. If you start crate-training with an eight to ten week old puppy, it should only take you a couple of weeks before your pup is behaving like a model dog. Your dog will have a richer life because he/she will be able to accompany you while traveling. Your friends/relatives will be much happier to dog-sit for you if you cannot take your dog. And your dog will be happier because you have clearly defined your expectations and he/she can anticipate what behaviors you want and fulfill one of their main priorities as dogs: to please you. At the end of the day, all of our gundogs have an innate desire to please and want your praise. So we need to create an environment where puppies have every opportunity to earn praise, rather than setting them up for error. Raising your new puppy will be challenging at times (especially when she is barking her head off at 3am), but keep the long-game in mind. A week with little sleep is nothing compared to 12-15 years of an ill-mannered dog. Your puppy is relying on you to define boundaries and set expectations. Do not let them down!