

♥ Never use force to get Rascal into the crate. This rule holds true forever. The first few times you use the crate, put in a small treat and a chew-toy, and walk the pup inside. Be sure Rascal faces the open crate door (so the pup won't feel trapped inside). Let the pup walk in and out a few times; then close the door.

After a few minutes (only at a moment that the pup is not crying), release Rascal for playtime in the safe zone. Each day, increase the length of time your dog is confined in the closed crate.

Important rule: Except for overnight sleeping, (see "bedtime" section below) a puppy should not be left in a closed crate for more than 3-4 hours (no more than 6-8 for an adult) — even after Rascal has completed the training period. For those times when your dog will be left alone for longer periods of time, Rascal should have access to the entire safe zone and an open crate.

♥ Just before you begin your own bedtime preparations, take Rascal outside for a last "bathroom" opportunity, put the pup into the closed crate for the night (see methods above), and say goodnight. Your pup may cry when you close the door but will quiet down eventually. Any kind of response from you — comforting sounds or even a shouted "QUIET!"—will only encourage more barking and crying from Rascal. Ignore the noise.

If at all possible, the crate should be in your bedroom for the night. Your breathing, your scent, and your presence are all very comforting for Rascal...especially if you haven't had much time together during the day.



### What shouldn't I do?

Rascal has a long, strong memory! Be careful not to leave any negative memories of the crate. The most common mistakes people make when trying to crate train a dog or puppy are:

- ♥ forcing or rushing Rascal into the crate — even one mistake like this is too many
- ♥ using the crate as punishment
- ♥ leaving Rascal in a closed crate too long during the day, or leaving the crate door closed so Rascal has no access to the open crate
- ♥ holding, cuddling, stroking, or talking to a pup until it falls asleep at night
- ♥ leaving the crate door open during the night (don't do this until your dog is completely trained)
- ♥ punishing Rascal for making a mess in the crate



### Can I crate train an adult dog?

You can use the same "safe zone" training method with an adult dog, and the dog may learn more quickly than a puppy. However, if the dog has ever had a negative experience with a crate, it will take extra time and patience to convince Rascal that the crate is a positive place to be. In that case, crating Rascal in your bedroom at night is vital — your dog needs to be reassured by your presence.



### Can I crate train a puppy when I'm away from home all day, every day?

If you are away from home that much, it is very important for you to realize that your puppy's training period will probably be longer and more difficult than average. Puppyhood is a time for learning, growing, playing, and napping. It's a struggle for a pup to learn good manners when your time for teaching is so severely limited.

With this schedule, Rascal would be confined for the majority of each 24-hour day. Your pup will only have a few hours to be active and to be with you — two important, separate needs. Then Rascal will be expected to sleep quietly through the night. That's too much to ask of any dog, adult or puppy.



For more information on pet issues and care, contact your local Animal Care and Control agency to ask for other pamphlets in this SmartHeart™ Educational Series including the following topics:

- ♥ Animal Control
- ♥ Bringing home a Puppy or Kitten
- ♥ Spaying and Neutering
- ♥ General Pet Care
- ♥ Selecting and adopting an adult pet
- ♥ General Health Care for Pets
- ♥ Crate Training
- ♥ Cats and Claws
- ♥ Destructive Dogs

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Permission to reprint this  
SmartHeart<sup>sm</sup>  
educational brochure  
has been granted to:



Crate train your pup or dog  
**CORRECTLY by:**

- ♥ Choosing the right crate for your dog
- ♥ Scheduling for adults & pups
- ♥ Using positive methods

SmartHeart<sup>sm</sup>

Crate training is a method of teaching your dog good manners, proper housetraining, and a day- and-night routine. A dog provided with a crate **and taught how great that crate can be** will be a secure, relaxed dog ready to trust you as the family leader who makes the rules and enforces them. Once Rascal accepts the crate as a safe, happy place, you can both benefit from crate training **EVERY DAY**:

- ♥ At home: At any time of the day or night, Rascal will have access to a personal bed and retreat. But it's even more important to have a place where your dog can be comfortably confined — for safety and sanity — whenever your home is especially hectic. Such situations may include:
  - ♥ when repair or maintenance people are in your home. Workers often must leave doors and gates open, use dangerous tools and chemicals, and may even need access to your home when you can't be present.
  - ♥ when you are involved in household chores, using tools or hazardous chemicals. And any time you use a stepladder, Rascal's "help" can be dangerous.
  - ♥ when you have visitors who are afraid of or allergic to your dog. Some visitors (especially young children) may actually be hazardous to Rascal's health!
  - ♥ when you entertain friends. Because of the excitement (and open doors) as people arrive, confine Rascal at least until most visitors are settled in.
  - ♥ when Rascal is recuperating from illness or injury.

♥ **In the car:** A crate protects your dog from being thrown violently when you must make a sudden turn or stop. It also prevents dog-interference with your driving.

♥ **Away from home:** The stress of visiting a kennel, grooming shop, or veterinary clinic is greatly reduced when your dog is accustomed to temporary confinement. In fact, Rascal will feel secure in the crate any time your dog will be in a strange place. Also, many hotels and motels will welcome a dog with such good training and with a place to stay inside your room (information on traveling with pets is available in our library).

However, a crate isn't magical; it must be used correctly or your dog will feel trapped and frustrated. Effective crate training must be approached with patience, consistency, and lots of positive reinforcement.



**STOP!** Are you starting out with the idea that "crate training" your dog means that Rascal will live in a cage? Forget that theory. A dog's crate should be a bed and a safe retreat from a loud, hectic world: a positive place. If you think of a crate as a cage or as a place for punishment, then crate training will not work for you and your dog. Your attitude toward the crate is even more important than Rascal's, especially at first.



## Why does crate training work?

Dogs are den animals, preferring the security and coziness of an enclosed or covered area that is all their own. When Rascal naps under furniture or curled into a chair, your dog is creating the feeling of a den.

A crate helps to teach clean "bathroom" habits because dogs do not like to sleep and eliminate in the same place. After you teach Rascal to accept the crate as a personal den, you can then gradually teach Rascal to consider your den (your entire home) as off-limits for elimination, too. **For specific details on housetraining, see SmartHeart™ pamphlet on puppy training.**



## How do I choose the right crate?

It is important to select the correct crate for your circumstances. Plan ahead; the crate should be ready for Rascal before your dog comes home. Crates are available in several sizes and styles.

♥ **Size:** Don't make the mistake of buying a crate that is too big. Your pup should have enough room to lie down, stand up, and turn around comfortably, but not enough to sleep in one corner and use the rest as a bathroom. Buy your crate from a good pet supply store; the staff there can help you select the right size.

If Rascal is a pup right now and will be fairly large when grown, try to rent or borrow a smaller crate for the first few months of training. Later you can buy a permanent crate in the correct size for your adult dog.

♥ **Style and Material:** Most crates are made of plastic or metal.

♥ Models made from **molded plastic** are lightweight, strong, and easy to clean and store (most separate into halves, like a walnut shell). Many plastic crates are accepted by airlines for transporting dogs; check with the airline for specific requirements before you buy a crate for that purpose.

The sturdy plastic walls provide protection from drafts. However, you should add bedding or extra flooring so that Rascal is not lying directly on the plastic floor which conducts heat and cold. (A soft, clean old towel is comfortable and washable.)

♥ **Metal crates** should be constructed of heavy gauge wire mesh (not solid metal sheeting), with no exposed sharp edges. Many styles fold flat for storage. A metal crate usually includes a metal pan under the crate floor which slides out for easy cleaning. Wire crates also need an added floor and/or soft bedding. *Paws are not designed to stand on wire mesh flooring.*

This open design doesn't have the privacy of an enclosed den which you need for crate training. To solve this problem, use a cloth cover to create "walls and ceiling" (leave the door area uncovered) during the training period, and continue to use it at night and whenever Rascal needs extra security. A cover will also help cut drafts, but not as well as the solid walls of the plastic crate. (Ready-made covers are available in canvas or plastic, or you can simply drape the crate with a sheet or blanket.)

♥ **Location:** Consider where the crate will be kept to determine how portable it should be. Will you be able to get the crate into your car and into Rascal's designated part of your home?

If you will be crating Rascal in your bedroom at night (see "bedtime" section below), it may be worthwhile to have two crates so that one stays in the bedroom permanently. Don't worry — a crate doesn't have to ruin your bedroom decor; you can cover it with a decorative sheet or blanket and disguise it as a bedside table!

If you do decide to have two crates, remember the importance of consistency: transfer the bedding from the "daybed" crate into the "bedtime" crate for the night, at least through the training period.



## After I choose it, how do I use the crate to create a den?

While you train your puppy or dog, you will need to set up a "safe zone." This is an area you can close off from the rest of your home with a door, screen, or gate. **Again, plan ahead; decide on the best place for Rascal's safe zone before you bring the pup or dog home.**

The safe zone creates a den **within** a den, a small area with the crate inside it. Your dog will be isolated in this area during the day while you teach Rascal the benefits of the crate. So make the safe zone a pleasant place to be.

♥ The safe zone should be large enough that the crate takes up no more than half of the space — less if possible. The crate should fit into a corner of the safe zone. Reserve

a small patch of floor in the corner farthest from the crate for a thick layer of newspaper. (If you cover the entire floor with paper, you will be giving Rascal permission to eliminate anywhere.)

♥ Try to choose an area where your pup can be part of some of your everyday household activities. Rascal wants to be included in your family, even when isolated for safety's sake.

A bathroom is a poor choice for the safe zone, since it is usually dark and boring and Rascal will consider time spent in and around the crate as punishment. **Never punish your dog in the crate or safe zone.** (For this very reason, a bathroom can be very useful for a quick "time-out" punishment — see SmartHeart™ pamphlet on puppy training.)

♥ If possible, the area should have a window to let in natural light. If not, be sure there is an overhead light that can be left burning all day. However, do not leave lamps turned on; these could be dangerous if accidentally overturned.



## How do I teach Rascal to accept the crate and the safe zone?

Rascal should be restricted to the safe zone whenever your dog will be without direct supervision for any length of time.

♥ From the very beginning, make a habit of spending time with Rascal in the safe zone, having fun, so that the area will have positive memories. (Another good positive boost is to place Rascal's food bowl just inside the open crate door at mealtimes.) Be sure that Rascal always has at least two safe toys available in the safe zone whenever you can't supervise — one hard rubber to chew and one soft fiber to toss and snuggle.

♥ Leave the crate door open, with access to the comfortable bedding inside. Add a soft, unwashed shirt to comfort Rascal with your scent. Turn on a radio (low volume), calmly and say a quick "good- bye," and go. Don't make a scene!

Soon Rascal will use the crate regularly as an open bed during the day, and you can begin teaching your dog to accept the closed crate.