

Washington Veterinary Clinic
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Using Your Crate for Housebreaking

- A. By instinct, a dog will not eliminate in his living space. Therefore, the crate used for housebreaking your dog should not give the pet too much room. Your dog needs to be able to stand, turn around, and lie flat in the crate. If the crate is too large, the pet may lie in one area and eliminate in another. If you have to use a larger crate, a partition or divider may be used to assure that your dog does not have the extra space.
- B. At bedtime, take the pet outside and give him a chance to exercise. Take him to an area he has already "used" if possible. Praise him strongly after he has finished.
- C. First thing in the morning, pick up your dog and take him outside. Praise him for eliminating. Bring your pet into the house and allow him to run free in a portion of the home where you can supervise him.
- D. After a time of "controlled freedom," when it is about time for your pup to eliminate again, put your dog back in the crate for several minutes. This will help train him to hold his urine when the urge hits. Take him outside to eliminate. Take your pup to the same area outside each time. This will cut down on curiosity that might lead to distractions. Use a command word when you go out such as "go potty" to let your pup know he needs to eliminate. Dogs react better if they can associate an action with a word or phrase from you. Do not play with your puppy outside until he has eliminated, otherwise he may become distracted and forget to eliminate. Praise him when he is finished and allow him "controlled freedom." Withhold food and water for about 2 hours prior to your puppy going to sleep for the night. This will cut down on nighttime accidents and trips outside.
- E. If your dog does not eliminate when you take him outside, do not scold him. Pick him up and put him back in his crate for several minutes more. Take him back outside to eliminate again. Repeat these steps until the pup successfully eliminates outside for you. Remember to give lots of praise for getting it right.
- F. Do not discipline your pup if you find an "accident" in the house. If there is more than five seconds between the act and the punishment, a dog will not associate the punishment with the act.
- G. The ability to control eliminations develops at different rates in individual pets. Be patient and consistent. After several weeks of training, most dogs should have the pattern pretty well set and can be allowed more freedom.
- H. If your pet has to be left alone while everyone is at work, do not keep him crated all night and then again for 8-12 hours while you are at work. Either provide a fenced area with shelter outside or provide an area in the home where the pet has room to move and play while you are not at home, but be sure to provide an appropriate area for him to eliminate. Newspaper or the dog litter box system are examples.

