

HOME ALONE



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Your new puppydog needs lots of attention (companionship, education, and play), but also to be taught how to entertain himself appropriately and how to thoroughly enjoy his time when left at home alone. Otherwise, a social vacuum can be a very lonely place. Puppies and dogs predictably develop housoiling, chewing, digging, and barking problems if allowed too much freedom and too little supervision and guidance during their first few weeks at home. Puppies and newly adopted dogs may become overdependent if allowed unrestricted access to their owners during the initial time in their new home. Overdependent dogs often become anxious when left at home alone, and they attempt to adapt to the boredom and stress of solitary confinement by busying themselves with doggy activities—chewing, digging, barking—which soon become owner-absent behavior problems. What else is there to do? Severely stressed dogs may work themselves up into a frenzy and spend the day circling, pacing, and panting.

a SPECIAL PLACE

Dogs are den animals, and they value their own special place — a place for peaceful retreat, a methodical chew, or even a snooze. A doggy den (a collapsible and portable dog crate and dog bed) is an ideal training tool. Apart from its obvious uses for transporting dogs by car or plane, a crate may be used for short-term confinement when you cannot supervise your puppydog—to keep him out of mischief and prevent him from making housoiling, destructive chewing, and digging mistakes. In addition, the crate may be used specifically to create good household habits: to houstrain your puppydog; to establish a hard-to-break chewtoy habit; to reduce excessive barking; to prevent inappropriate digging; and to foster confidence and calmness. Right from the outset, when you are home, regularly confine your pup for “little quiet moments” in his dog crate in order to teach household manners and imbue confidence. Then your dog can look forward to enjoying a lifetime with the full run of your house, whether you are home or not.

TEACH YOUR PUPPYDOG TO ENJOY HIS DOGGY DEN

A dog crate is really no different than a child’s crib, playpen, or bedroom. The first item on the agenda is to teach your puppydog to thoroughly enjoy spending time in his doggy den. Stuff your puppy’s first meal into a hollow chewtoy (see our Chewing blueprint), tie the chewtoy inside the crate, and leave the door open so the pup may come and go as he pleases. Praise your puppy while he chews the chewtoy and supervise the puppy if he leaves the crate. Once the pup has settled down for a quiet chew, you may close the crate door. For your pup’s second meal, put the stuffed chewtoys inside the crate and shut the door with the puppy on the outside. Once your puppy worries at the crate to get to his dinner, let the puppy enter his crate and close the door behind him. From now on, always give your puppy a stuffed chewtoy when confining him to his crate. Your pup will soon learn that confinement is for a short time—and an enjoyable time.

TEACH YOUR DOG TO TEACH HERSELF

When at home, always confine your puppydog with a variety of hollow chewtoys stuffed with kibble and treats. Confining a dog to a crate with an attractive chewtoy is like confining a child to an empty room with a video game. This is called autoshaping. All you have to do is set up the situation, and your dog will automatically train herself. Each treat extricated from the chewtoy progressively reinforces chewing chewtoys and settling down calmly and quietly. Your dog will soon become hooked on her chewtoy-habit, leaving very little time for inappropriate chewing, digging, or barking. And if your puppydog is happily preoccupied chewing her chewtoy, she will fret less.

HOUSETRAINING

A dog crate may be used to predict when your puppy needs to relieve herself. Regular, but short-term (one hour or less) confinement inhibits your puppy from eliminating. This means that she will want to eliminate immediately when released each hour and taken to her toilet area, where she is handsomely rewarded with tasty training treats. However, never confine your unhouse-trained puppy to her crate for longer than an hour, or when you are away from home; otherwise, the poor pup may be forced to soil her bedroom. As a temporary necessity until your puppy is house-trained, leave her in a special long-term confinement area.

HOLE-ALONE DOGS need an OCCUPATION

Preparing dogs for inevitable periods of solitary confinement—and specifically teaching them how to occupy their time when left at home alone—is the most pressing humane consideration for any new puppydog in any household. Every dog requires some form of enjoyable occupational therapy. Vocational chewtoy chewing is the easiest and most enjoyable solution. Dogs are crepuscular (most active at dawn and dusk), and so it is pretty easy to teach them how to calmly pass the time of day. During your puppydog's first few days and weeks at home, regularly confine him to a crate with stuffed chewtoys. Prepare the pup for your absence when you are present. When at home, it is possible to monitor your pup's behavior when confined for numerous short periods throughout the day. Your puppydog's first impressions of an established daily routine create an acceptable and enjoyable status quo for years to come. Remember, once your puppydog is confident, independent, and trained, he may enjoy free range of your house and garden for the rest of his life.