

canine questions

By Sharon Harvey

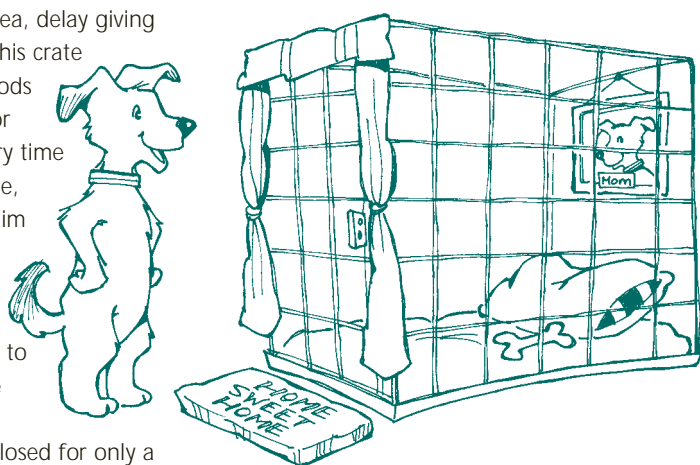
I'm thinking about crate training my Skye Terrier mix puppy but have absolutely no idea how to get started. Every time I shut the door, he transforms into a canine siren. Is there a less ear-piercing way?

A For starters, you need to teach your dog to love his crate and treasure it as his special, safe, quiet place. The crate should never, ever be used for punishment.

Begin with short training sessions and teach your dog to go into the crate on command. Every time he goes in, give him a GREAT reward. Once he gets the idea, delay giving the reward until he stays in his crate for progressively longer periods of time. Leave the crate door open and reinforce him every time he chooses to go in the crate, then continue to reinforce him for staying inside with the door open. Once you establish a strong positive reinforcement history, begin to close the door and reinforce him for being calm with the door shut. At first, leave it closed for only a few seconds before rewarding him, and then gradually increase the time between reinforcements until he's content to rest calmly in his crate without reward.

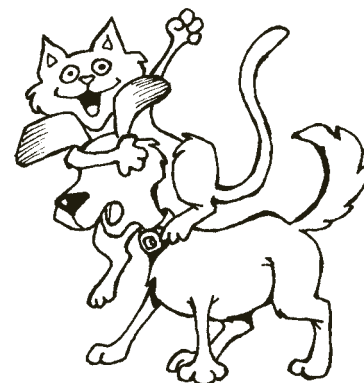
If you're forced to leave him alone in his crate before he's completely adjusted, make sure to give him an EXTRA SPECIAL treat that he only gets when he's in his crate. It needs to be something that he adores and that will last long enough to keep his mind occupied. Kongs stuffed with frozen peanut butter and marrowbones stuffed with frozen Bil Jac are good examples. If he starts to fuss ignore him. During the training, never let him out of the crate when he's barking, whining or hollering! If you do break down, he'll learn that's his ticket out and his cacophony will only escalate. If you need to let him out and he's in the middle of carrying on, hold out until he offers even the slightest of breaks, reinforce him for being calm, wait a few seconds and then let him out.

During his destructive, tinkling, puppy days, crate training your dog is the best way to ensure happy reunions after he has been unsupervised for a while. As dogs are denning animals by nature, many instinctively view their crates as a quiet, safe hideaway. As dogs tend not to want to soil the area they sleep in, crate training



is a fabulous way to house train puppies. For it to work, you must only give the pup enough room to lie flat and stand up and turn around. This way, he can't get away from his accidents and learns he has to hold it to keep his home neat and clean. When he stops having accidents, gradually increase the space he's allowed in the crate. As puppies only have little bladders, you should NEVER leave young ones for more than 2-3 hours at a time. This may mean setting the alarm to get up in the middle of the night. The object of the exercise is to do everything you can to make him successful.

Teaching your dog to love his crate also prepares him for trips to the vet, the groomer, and the kennel and for being a well-behaved roomie when on the road. Best of all, if you really embrace the training and use your imagination and a little fabric, his unsightly crate could become the next home decorating success story on "Queer Eye for the Straight Skye!"



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440.338.4819, ext. 13 or send an e-mail to askthetrainer@geaugahumane.org. We'll help you solve your problem or refer you to someone who can. The most frequently asked questions will find their way into the Rescue Village Reporter's Ask the Trainer column or onto Q104's Ask the Trainer radio segment that can be heard on Sunday's Wilde & Fee Morning Show during the 8 o'clock hour.

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To foster compassion for all living things through education

To reduce pet overpopulation through spay/neuter programs

To prevent cruelty by advocating and enforcing animal protection laws