



Guide Dogs for the Blind

Puppy Raising Department Ruff Notes – August 2017

Crating Issues

Occasionally we have young dogs arrive on campus that display anxiety when crated. Some may balk at going into a crate and some may enter willingly but then show signs of stress in the crate. When we look back at the dogs' history, we see that they were successfully crate trained as youngsters; so why are they avoidant of/uncomfortable in crates when they come to campus?

Possible causes of negative crate behavior and how to address them:

The puppy became reliable in its house behavior so the raiser stopped using a crate to confine the puppy.
The puppy should continue to be crated for several hours at a time throughout its raising. This should include daytime crating, not just when the raiser is in bed. The pup should be crated both when people are at home and when left alone. It should be accustomed to being confined with people in the same room and with people in other rooms that can be heard but not seen. Continuing this type of training at least four times per week until the puppy returns for training is recommended for a guide dog puppy.

The puppy was only exposed to one or two crates with its own scent in the crate.
Sometimes, if a pup has not been traded or puppy sat frequently, it may balk at the odor of other dogs in a crate. Puppies should be socialized to different crates utilizing a food reward for entering the crate at first to set the puppy up for success. See "Crate Introduction Game":
<https://www.guidedogs.com/uploads/files/Puppy-Raising-Manual/Crate-Introduction-Game.pdf>

The puppy has only been crated in one type of crate.
Wire crates are convenient and cooler than a plastic crate but GDB puppies are more likely to be crated in a plastic crate on campus and in the graduate's home. The noise and rattle of a wire crate is good preparation for riding in the training vans. Exposure to both types of crate as a youngster is beneficial.

The puppy has not learned to accept crating in different areas or with a lot of activity going on around it.
Once again, trading and puppy sitting makes for an adaptable puppy that will settle in a crate in novel environments. Being crated in different home and work situations (with a food-laden Kong at first) is excellent practice for a puppy. Leaders should also have club meetings where some raisers work on crate behavior while other puppies are being actively trained on Paw Pad games etc. Keeping the crated puppies well reinforced with kibble dropped into their crates is good preparation for the busy campus environment later on.

Preparing for the Training Van

GDB puppies should be prepared for riding in the training vans by traveling in a crate in a vehicle on a regular basis. This doesn't mean that the pup has to be crated every time it rides in a car; we want them to be comfortable riding on the floor of a vehicle too. We also recognize that not everyone has a vehicle capable of accommodating a crate. Giving every puppy the opportunity to experience riding in crates in different vehicles can be a club project.

When puppies are traded/puppy sat frequently they will be exposed to riding in different vehicles; probably some novel vehicles will also have crates.

A club meeting can be held in a large parking lot with raisers taking turns giving puppies rides crated in different vehicles. To ensure a positive association a food-laden Kong can be placed in the crate and/or kibble tossed into the crate before loading the puppy. Obviously considerate driving is a must for inexperienced puppies!

Wire crates rattle and can be slippery. Exposure to wire crates in a vehicle is recommended but a sensitive puppy may need to habituate to a wire crate at home before being asked to ride in one. Placing a towel or rubber mat on the floor of the crate to prevent sliding is acceptable if someone can watch the puppy for chewing. Otherwise taking the tray out of the crate may actually be more comfortable for the pup than sliding around.

It has been found that keeping the vehicle very cool is conducive to settled, comfortable puppies. This may mean the human occupants have to turn up the air and wear a jacket!

Much more information on introducing puppies to riding in vehicles both crated and on the floor can be found in the section Teaching the Puppy to Ride Calmly in Vehicles in the “Socialization” document online: <https://www.guidedogs.com/uploads/files/Puppy-Raising-Manual/Puppy-Socialization.pdf>