



PET BEHAVIOR LIBRARY

LONG-TERM CONFINEMENT

What is Long-Term Confinement?

Long-term confinement is a strategy for confining your puppy to a dedicated area when you will be away for longer than she can be crated for.

The following are guidelines for maximum crate-training times. Anything amount of time longer than these should use long-term confinement rather than a crate:

8-10 weeks old — up to 1 hour

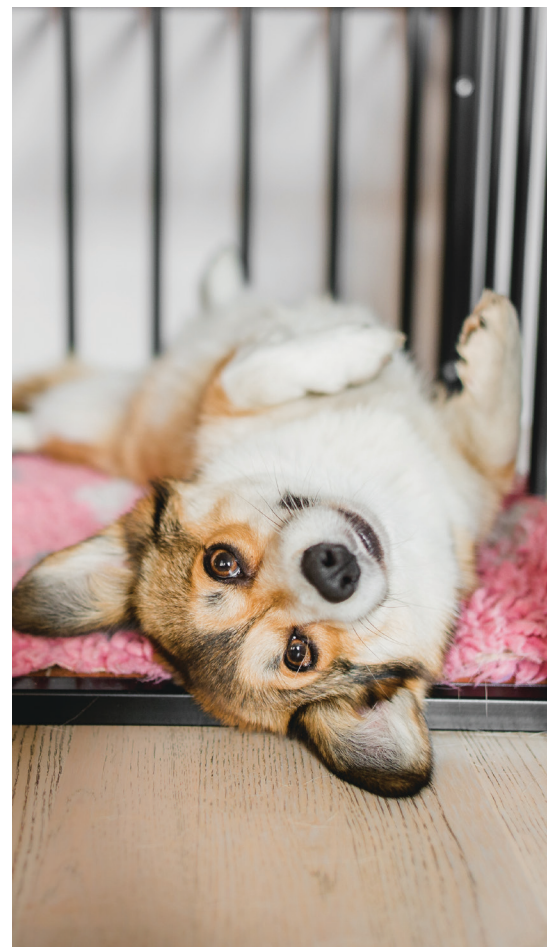
11-12 weeks old — up to 2 hours

13-16 weeks old — up to 3 hours

4 months and older — up to 4 hours

The difference between a crate and a long-term confinement area is mostly size. A long-term confinement area may be a room in your home, an ex-pen, or any arrangement that's big enough to house your puppy's crate and water bowl, some toys on one end, and an appropriate indoor potty area on the other end.

This type of confinement prevents destructive chewing and potty accidents, teaches boundaries, and shows your puppy that some alone time is totally normal. It keeps your puppy safe from things in your house, and it keeps your house and belongings safe from your puppy.



Confinement? Surely that's too strict!

Not at all! It's the best possible start for your puppy to adjust to your household. People often give a new puppy full run of the house right away. Then, when she has an accident or chews on the furniture, they confine her, but the damage has been done and your puppy has already started taking to these behaviors. *Instead, give your puppy a safe and confined place from the beginning so she can make a gradual and successful transition to her new home.* She will be much happier, she will begin to understand that there are boundaries and rules (an important lesson for the rest of her life!).

How does it help with housetraining?

Your young puppy can only hold it for so long. You want to avoid having your puppy have accidents in her crate — it will make housetraining more difficult.

Long-term confinement provides a designated area where any accidents are easy to clean up. It prevents your puppy from voiding in her crate and also prevents her from developing the habit of going in your house.

But she holds it all night!

Nighttime, and especially sleeping hours, are not always an accurate gauge of how long your puppy can "hold it" during the day. At night, your puppy is inactive and sleeping, so she can hold it for much longer. *In general, puppies should be able to sleep through the night at about 4 months of age.*

When do I use it?

Use a long-term confinement area when you will be gone for extended periods of time, such as at work, and the length of time you are away exceeds the amount of time your puppy can be crated for.

Setting up the long-term confinement area

The ideal confinement area is easy to clean and easy to close off with a door or baby gate that your puppy can't jump over. It should be mostly free of furniture and non-puppy related objects. The best places for a confinement area are the kitchen, laundry room, bathroom, or an empty spare room. If you don't have a room that will work, you can use an exercise pen (AKA an X Pen) around your puppy's crate.

Be sure to include

- Your puppy's crate (with the door open) and soft bedding inside
- Water and food bowls
- Chew toys that are safe for your puppy while she is unsupervised (e.g., a Kong stuffed with her breakfast that she can eat when you leave for work)

Bonus points!

- Have a white noise machine in the room (that she can't reach) or leave the TV on for her!



Tips for getting your puppy used to her confinement area

- Take your puppy out for a walk or bathroom break.
- Give her a chew bone or a stuffed Kong. Leave her alone in the confinement area while you go about your business in the house. Avoid making a big fuss over leaving.
- After 5 minutes or before she finishes her chew, let her out but don't make a big deal about it or make a fuss over her.
- Repeat steps 1-3, gradually increasing the time you leave your puppy in her confinement area without leaving the house. Vary the length of your absences, from 30 seconds to 20 minutes, and repeat them throughout the day.
- Leave your puppy in her confinement area (or crate) at night. It is normal for her to try a little crying as a strategy to get out, so brace yourself. She has to get used to alone time.
- Within the first day or two, start leaving the house for really short intervals, such as going to the mailbox or taking out the trash. Gradually work up to longer absences, like running errands.

Extra training tips

Be patient as your puppy learns to stay put in her confinement area. Of course she wants to be with you, but she won't always be able to follow you around. Teaching her to settle in a safe place when you need her to will provide huge benefits in the long run.

If your puppy begins to howl, whine, or bark, wait until she has been quiet for at least 10 seconds before entering the space where the confinement area is or letting her out. Your puppy will learn quickly when howling, barking or whining gets your attention (we define attention as making eye contact, talking to or touching/petting your puppy) or gets her out of her confinement area. Remember that your puppy is learning all the time, and if barking or crying for your attention or for freedom works then she will bark and cry more often and for longer in the future. Be mindful of the behaviors you provide rewards for.

Questions? Contact our Pet Helpline at spcawake.org/helpline or (919) 772-2326 opt 5, and we'll be happy to help you!