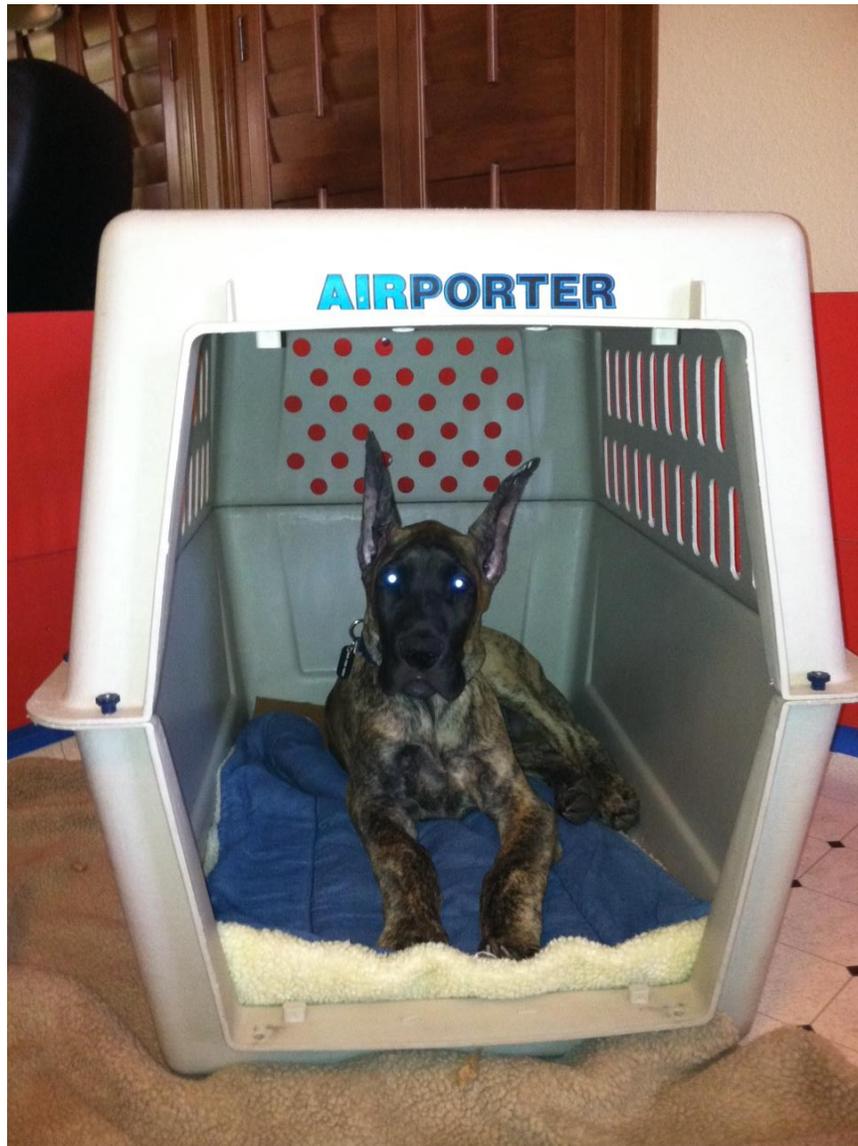


A GREAT DANE OWNERS PRIMER TO CRATES

By Georgia Hymmen/Daynakin Great Danes



A GREAT DANE OWNER'S PRIMER TO CRATES

Why Use A Crate

There is “BC” (before crates) and “AC” (after crates). Any BC person who has converted to an AC person will tell you it’s the only way to go, especially if you are housebreaking a puppy, dealing with destructive chewing, or just need a little time away from your Dane.

People who have never crate trained often have misconceptions about crates. They think crate use is mean, a form of punishment, or it’s even cruel to crate a dog. Just the opposite is true. Proper crate use can speed up housebreaking and prevent destructive chewing—a big problem for some Danes. A Dane puppy who doesn’t learn house manners early on may find himself living outside or worse, losing his home.

On the first night of the Puppy Kindergarten classes I teach, I asked those who don’t use crates to raise their hands. Generally, fifty percent are “BC’ers”. I then asked them what sort of problems they are having with their puppy. The response is just what I would expect: problems with housebreaking and destructive chewing. I ask how many in the class use crates, and the response is about twenty-five percent who are recently converted “BC’er’s” with the balance of the class having used crates for some time. I encourage the crate-users to tell about their experiences with crating—and they end up convincing the BC’ers that crates are a good thing! By the end of class, the new crate users are sold on the idea of crating, and are amazed at how it helped with

To understand why crates work so well with dogs, you need to remember dogs



are den animals, and Danes are no different. Given a chance, a young puppy will seek out a protected place, a “den”. If you watch a litter, you will notice they often go to a corner to sleep in. At your home, the puppy may go to sleep under an end table, against the couch, or some other “protected” area. In fact, if you provide young puppies (still together in a litter) with a crate,

they will automatically go in it. When you crate train, you are providing the puppy with a safe and secure “den”—their bedroom, so to speak. It’s not a punishment, but their own area

Another wonderful thing about Dane puppies is they generally try to stay clean if you give them a chance. In the wild, wolf babies will totter away from their mother to eliminate. As they get older, they will go further away from the den. This is even true in a litter of puppies—as they begin to walk, they will move away from their bed area to eliminate. As humans, we can take advantage of that desire to stay clean by using a crate. The urge for the puppy to keep his den clean will speed up housebreaking amazingly fast if a few basic guidelines are followed along with fair and consistent training.



After the Dane baby is housebroken—and they can learn to be clean wonderfully fast with the use of a crate and consistent training—the crate is invaluable in preventing destructive chewing. Face it—some Danes simply like to destroy things. If left unsupervised, those individuals are going to wreak havoc on anything left in their path. And while a small breed may leave tiny teeth marks on a table leg, the Dane is going to eat the whole leg and maybe even the table. Leaving an adolescent Dane unattended in the house for several hours is equivalent to leaving a sixteen-year-old in an empty house for the weekend—with the car keys and a full liquor cabinet. Not a good idea!

Crates are also helpful when you need a “time out” from the Dane puppy who feels he must be underfoot all the time. It’s hard to get things done when the puppy is attacking the vacuum cleaner, tracking in mud faster than you can mop the floor, or helping with the laundry by grabbing the stack of towels you just folded. Also, crate training will help the puppy learn to be calm and quiet when by himself, and that he doesn’t have to have a human there at all times. Being self-sufficient is an important trait to help avoid separation anxiety.

Another important reason for crate training is in the unfortunate event you have a disaster and have to be evacuated. Many shelters will allow well-behaved crated dogs. Having crating skills may be the difference in having your dog accepted at a shelter and the family having a place to stay.

Crates are also very useful when you travel. When in your vehicle, the crate provides a safe and secure place for your dog. Not only does it prevent him from getting in your way when driving, but also will help keep him safe should there be an accident. When you get to your destination, the crate can be put

in the motel room and the dog has a familiar place—and you know you won't be having to pay to repair damage an uncrated dog may cause. Puppies can be taught to eat in their crates, so they have a familiar meal place when not at home.

The proper use of a crate can also teach the dog to be adaptable. If he's used to being crated, you can put him almost anywhere and he's going to be comfortable and secure. This could be very important if you ever need to leave your Dane with someone else or he has to spend time overnight at a vet clinic. Training your Dane to be adaptable is a very important thing—Danes who have not learned to be accepting of new surroundings tend to be difficult for others to care for and stress. It's a proven fact that stress can cause bloat and/torsion.

Crate Training



Crate training is relatively easy if a few basic guidelines are followed. First and foremost, the crate *is not* to be used for punishment. It is a place for your dog to rest quietly or sleep. Second, be reasonable about the amount of time your Dane will spend in it at any one period. How long that is will depend greatly on your dog, his age, and his personality and his activity level. Expecting an adolescent Dane puppy to spend eight hours in a crate while you go to work is unreasonable. Expecting a baby Dane to spend three to four hours is reasonable if the puppy has had adequate time to run and play, and of course go

potty!

When crate training, routine is important but it is also imperative to remember to “mix it up”. Place the crate in different locations. Randomly put the puppy in his crate even if it's during a time he doesn't necessarily need to be in it. Put it in a different room; one that you are not in all the time. Dogs are very smart; if you follow the same routine, you can be setting the puppy up for possible separation anxiety. An example would be when leaving for work:



The owner always follows the same routine, makes a big deal of leaving the puppy, grabs his coat and keys, and heads out the door. The puppy knows these actions result in his owner leaving, so starts to kick up a fuss. A way to avoid this would be do those actions at random times; with sometimes actually leaving and other times just walking out the door. Never make a big deal of leaving or coming back.

Using A Crate For Housetraining



While the below section is aimed towards crate training for housebreaking purposes, the same guidelines can be used for basic crate training. This section covers topics that have been covered earlier, but are worth reviewing.

Housebreaking a puppy doesn't have to be a horrifying experience. If you remember a few things about canines and commit yourself to a schedule and consistency, the process will go very smoothly. Remember the "Why A Crate Section"? First, dogs are den animals. They have, in nature, a home. If you watch young puppies, you will find, if given a choice, they will readily go and sleep in an enclosed area. You might note that your puppy tends to sleep under or beside something; following his instincts to have a den. □

In the wild, dens are to be kept clean. As soon as the puppy is able to learn, his mother teaches him to eliminate outside of the den area. If you observe young puppies while they are still in the whelping box you will note they attempt to leave the sleeping area to eliminate as soon as they can walk. Also, if the breeder has kept the puppy area very clean, the puppy will be easier to housebreak.

We can imitate nature by providing your dog with his own den. In this case--a crate. The puppy owner can choose between wire and plastic; plastic is easier to clean in the event of a messy



accident and is the preferred choice by me for young puppies. (Once a Dane is housebroken, a larger wire crate can be used.)

When you start housebreaking, you must use a crate that is large enough to just *fit* the puppy. He should have enough room to stand up, turn around, and lie down in comfortably--but no more! Remember, the idea is for the puppy to keep his den clean. If the area is too large, he simply will get up, walk a little distance from his sleeping area, and eliminate. By keeping the area small he will be unable to find a corner in which to eliminate. Your young puppy is coming to you with an open mind. It is up to you, with consistency, repetition, praise, patience, and kindness, to help him develop into a dog of which you can be proud. A simple rule that *must* be followed is when the pup is left unattended inside the house; he must be restricted to his crate. In other words, the puppy is never left unsupervised. He's either in his crate, outside in a fenced area, attached to you with a leash, gated in a room with you or under your direct supervision.

Common sense tells you to take the puppy outside after he eats, drinks, or awakes from a nap. Frequent potty breaks when inside playing or "hanging out" uncrated are important. Remember, after he has eliminated outside praise him! Teaching the dog a command word to eliminate can be very helpful.

Restrict your puppy to his crate at bedtime, when you are away from home for several hours or when you cannot provide direct supervision. As long as he is old enough and has control, he will wait to relieve himself until given the opportunity to go outside. Remember; be fair, though--he is only a puppy!



Furnish the crate simply. Use a rug, crate mate, old blanket or towels to provide him with a comfortable area. Make sure the entire area is covered. This will convey the idea that no part of the area should be used as a washroom. Don't purchase expensive bedding at this



point as there is always the chance it will become soiled—or ruined if you have a chewer. Bedding must be kept clean. Any soiled bedding should be removed immediately. As long as there is a scent on it, the dog may be drawn to that area.

The crate is his home. Favorite toys should always be returned to the crate when playtime is over. You can also make the crate more inviting by hiding special treats in the back before he enters and teaching “tricks” like going to the crate on command from a distance.

The crate will serve as his home for his lifetime. He will feel comfortable and secure in it. It will be an asset when traveling or restricting his activity when non-doggy friends or relatives come to visit. The crate can also be used to house the dog when you just don’t want him underfoot. If you have young children, you can teach them the crate is “off limits”. The puppy will soon learn he can go to his crate when he has had enough of the kids!

As the puppy becomes older and more reliable, a larger crate can be used. Used crates are very easy to find, and I would suggest simply purchasing the size you need while the puppy is small, then retiring it and moving up to the next size as the puppy grows.

A crate is a necessary investment worth its weight in gold. Use the following schedule to assist in a step—by--step account of how to housebreak your puppy.

1. Bedtime-take the puppy outside and give him ample time to eliminate. Take him to a spot where he has eliminated previously; this will help him get the idea. If you have a fenced area, let him loose. If on leash, be sure not to choke him. Use either a buckle collar or a training collar on the inactive ring. Using a command is helpful.
2. When he eliminates, praise him. Let him know how good he was for doing his business outside.
3. Keep praising, play with him for a few minutes, and then take him inside and put him in his crate for bedtime.

4. Morning-*the very first thing*-pick him up (don't expect a young puppy to walk outside without stopping to pee!) and take him outside. He's tried to be clean all night, so you hurry to get him outside, and he will do his business in a rush. Now, bring him in and give him his freedom in a confined area like the kitchen with the door blocked as long as you are going to be with the pup. Remember, always supervised! Baby gates work well for this.
5. Feed-after you have done your first morning chores and after your breakfast, feed him his food. He's had his freedom up until this point, but after he eats, take him outside or put him in the yard.
6. After you have seen him eliminate, bring him inside and put him in his crate. If he's had ample time to romp and play, and you've spent some time with him, he can nap until lunch-time.
7. At lunch-time take him out of the crate and put him in the yard to romp and play a bit.
8. Bring him in after he eliminates and give him confined freedom with you for one or two hours-then take him outside for a "quickie". Now, put him back in the crate until late afternoon.
9. At dinner time, take him outside from the crate for another "quickie". Bring him in for confined freedom while you prepare your dinner and his. After you eat, feed the pup, then take him outside just as soon as he finishes. Naturally, you can feed him before you eat, provided you have the time to follow the "exercise" procedure. Do not feed later than 6:00 p.m.!
10. After dinner, allow him controlled, confined freedom until about 8:00 p.m., and then out for another quickie.
11. Before you retire for the night, go through the bedtime (#1) routine.

If you keep this routine diligently for at least two weeks of preventing him from doing toilet duties in the house, showing him how to be right and praising for correct actions-the pattern should be set. You can now start to check on his learning by allowing a little more freedom from his crate. Incidentally, when the puppy is out of the crate, the door is always left open in the event he wants to go in. The extended freedom is still only in the confined area and supervised-just in the morning; so, if he's "good", the next day try the afternoon. Do not test your puppy all night after only two weeks! After a few more weeks, if the pup is good, then confine him to his crate only at night and when you leave the house. Then, test whenever you please! The testing process should be very slow; leaving unattended for 5 or 10 minutes at first and building up from there.

Once you are confident of his progress, start limited introduction to the other room, but only when you are with the puppy and when your attention can be on him. It won't hurt to have him on a leash while you watch TV. Important—during these lessons of freedom, be sensitive to any whining or attempts to go to the door; to any loss of interest in you or a toy; to any circling—get the puppy outside immediately!

Crate Manners

Your Dane puppy should be expected to have a few manners when it comes to his crate.

When you begin crate training, do not let your puppy out of the crate if he is whining or screaming for no good reason. Of course it goes without saying you know he's pottied and there is nothing wrong, so you know he's just doing "recreational yelling". If you let the puppy out every time he screams or paws at the crate door for no reason, he quickly will learn his obnoxious behavior gets him what he wants—out of the crate!

Crate training a young puppy can be a noisy experience for the first few days (and nights). The astute breeder will have started crate training, which certainly makes things much easier on the owner.

If a puppy is screaming, and you've determined everything is all right, give him a "Hush!" or "Quiet" command in a sharp voice. Chances are, he will stop for a second when you give the command—take that opportunity to praise him for being quiet. You can quickly toss a goody in the crate or use verbal praise.



If that doesn't work, you can try giving the "Quiet!" command and tapping on the crate. Sometimes covering the crate with a blanket works. At any rate, you need to let the dog know that screaming while in his crate, unless he has a very good reason, is not acceptable.

The other thing your Dane puppy needs to learn is to "Wait" before he comes out of his crate. He should never just barge out of the crate, or worse yet, smash the door open with his foot while you are unlatching it. He should not

assume just because the door is open he can get out unless he has your “permission” to do so. This can be easily taught by simply opening the crate door, and holding the puppy back with the “Wait” command. Once the puppy “gets it” by waiting, even if just for one second, praise and give the release word (I use “OK!”) and he can leave his crate.

Don’t allow your Dane puppy to be a gate-crasher—one who constantly paws at the crate. Not only is this irritating, it’s dangerous, as the dog can sometimes work the latches open, or even get a toe or foot caught. It also sets a pattern of bad behavior should the owner choose to use a soft crate later—soft crates cannot stand up to pawing. If a dog learns to break a zipper on a soft crate, he most likely will never stay in one again.

Types of Crates

Before you purchase your first crate for your Great Dane, take a little time to figure out what your needs will be for this valuable piece of equipment. Factors to be taken into consideration prior to your purchase are the age/size of your dog, what you primarily need to use your crate for, whether you are going to be moving it around on a regular basis, and of course, cost.

The three basic types of crates generally seen in the dog community are:

- The molded plastic or fiberglass crate, (sometimes called a Vari-Kennel although that is actually a brand) is the type used as a shipping crate by airlines. These crates come in three pieces: a door, a top section and a bottom section. The top and bottom section fasten together with bolts, which are inserted into the “lip” portion of the two sections. This is a good choice for young puppies.
- The wire crate, which some people refer to as a cage.
- The soft crate, made of mesh fabric on a frame of PVC pipe or aluminum rod.

The different types of crates all have their good points and bad points when it comes to housing your Great Dane.

The Plastic/Fiberglass Crate



The molded plastic crate comes in a variety of sizes. On the plus side, plastic crates are wonderful for housebreaking young puppies. Keeping in mind the puppy should only have enough room to stand up, turn around, and lie down; the different sizes of plastic crates available are suitable for the various stages of your fast-growing puppy. The fact they are enclosed is a great benefit in dealing with an un-housebroken puppy that just had a major “accident”. The “accident” is contained,

making clean-up much easier. Another consideration for the owner of a cropped puppy is that if the puppy is wearing an ear rack, the rack is much less prone to get caught in a plastic crate than in a wire one.

On the down side, the plastic crates are actually quite impractical for adult Danes. They are very cumbersome and awkward to move around. The “lip” that holds the crate together with bolts protrudes from the crate and wastes space. Even the largest plastic crate really isn’t big enough for most Danes, and the ventilation during warmer weather is pretty poor. Storage can also be an issue. While the top and bottom do come apart and will nest, the large size alone can make it a challenge for homes with storage concerns. Aesthetically, one might also consider that wire crates, especially in colors, will tend to blend into a room’s décor far more than a huge fiberglass box.

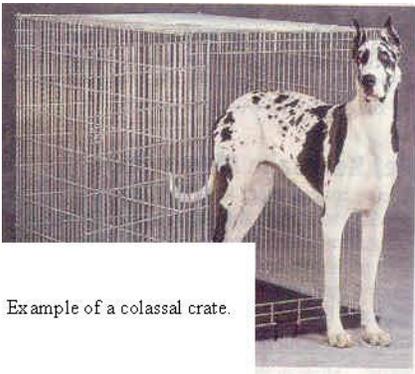
Wire Crates

Wire crates are generally assembled in one of two ways. “Suitcase crates” are constructed as one-piece, fold open for use and collapse into a “suitcase” shape when closed for storage. “Pin crates” come in panels that fit together with long “pins” or rods at each corner.



Pin types: While the pin-type crate is usually less expensive than its suitcase-type counterpart, one must weigh the difference in cost over difficulty of set-up. With a pin crate you have at least six panels consisting of a top, bottom, two sides, and a front and back, and also a pan or tray for the bottom. Assembling the crate takes about 10-20 minutes if all the pieces are true. If a rod or panel has become damaged or bent, the crate can

be very difficult to assemble. Moving pin-type crates around when they are assembled can be a challenge, as the panels tend to shift somewhat and the size makes it difficult to go through some doorways. When stored, the unassembled crate panels are fairly large, but stacked together are not that deep. An important safety issue with pin-type crates is the method in which the side panels attaches to the bottom. The floor panel has upside down J-shaped pieces which the side panel fits into. If an owner forgets to remove a collar, the dog could easily become caught in this piece. Pin-type crates come in a variety of sizes and finishes. It should be noted that the extra-large crates (described below) such as the Precision 7000 or the Midwest Colossal only come in a pin-type style.



Example of a colossal crate.

A pin-type crate is suitable for households who are not going to be moving it from place to place. A pin-type crate is not suggested for ring-side use at a dog show, since it is more time consuming and awkward to set up.

Suitcase types: The suitcase-type crate is made of one-piece construction with a removable pan at the bottom. This crate folds down into a “suitcase” shape, making it easy to transport (although still pretty heavy). The suitcase-style crate is preferable to most people because of the ease of transport, set-up and tear-down. They are generally a bit shorter in height than the pin crates and thus possibly easier to store as well. They also have no pins to become bent or lost. This type of crate is suggested for ring-side use at shows, and at homes where the crate may be moved around from room to room or various places while traveling.

There is a third “sub-type” of wire crate made in one-piece construction manufactured by a company called Central Metal. This crate style is called “mini-fold”. It unfolds and hooks together for use, without the need of pins, and folds flat for storage. It is very difficult to locate.

Many wire crates come with a divider that can be used to section off an adult-size crate into a smaller area for use with young puppies. This is very practical for the household who wants one crate for the various life stages of their Dane. Remember—a puppy should only have enough space to stand up, turn around and lie down during the time a crate is being used as a house-training tool.

Too much space and the puppy will simply get up, go to the end of the crate and potty, and then go back to his sleeping area.

Other considerations for wire crates include:

- Spacing between the wires: If the spacing is too wide, a dog can easily get a paw or even a leg caught between the slates and possibly severely injure himself. Very careful attention should be paid to spacing when putting a cropped puppy wearing an ear rack into a wire crate.
- Examine the gate latches: Chances are if it's really simple for you to open, it will also be for the Dane! While most Danes are very accepting of their crates, you don't want to be like the family who came home after shopping during Christmas season to find their Dane had become an escape artist in their absence. Once out of her crate, she headed directly for the Christmas tree, knocked it over, and destroyed \$1500.00 worth of presents that were under the tree. There are several different types of gate latches, ranging from spring loaded to a simple slide bolt. Check them out carefully before committing to a crate.
- What type of flooring does the crate have? Most of the wire crates come with a pan, made of plastic, steel or aluminum. Steel pans are the best choice, although not found in many crates due to their weight and expense. Aluminum would be the second choice, but after time will bend and even crack. The plastic, which most crates seem to have now, is a distant third choice. While plastic pans are a suitable floor for younger puppies, the heavy weight of an older Dane will soon cause the pan to crack and split.
- What gauge is the wire? Heavier gauge crates are of course stronger (and weigh more) than smaller gauge. If your Dane is well-behaved, you can most likely go with the smaller, less-expensive gauge. If your Dane is a "gate-crasher" or you are trying to crate-train an adult, you'd best go with the heavier gauge.
- What type of finish does the crate have? Wire crates can be epoxy-covered, or be simply wire. Some are coated with a bright finish. Note that the crates with a dull finish may leave grayish marks on a dog, which might be an issue with lighter-colored Danes. Epoxy-covered wire crates come in several different colors such as white, black, and bronze.
- What size and what purpose? If you desire to have a crate fit into your vehicle, measure very carefully. Sometimes getting the right fit is difficult. Make sure that the crate will fit through the door as well as

fit in the interior of the vehicle. A suitcase crate can go in a door collapsed and be set up inside *only if* there is room for it to be unfolded as it is set up. If fit is at all questionable, borrow a crate or try it at the store instead of relying on measurements.

- Do the door locations suit your needs? Many wire crates can be ordered with left or right opening doors, side doors, doors on each end and even top openings. Crates with special door openings such as these generally need to be special ordered.

Soft-Sided Crates

A relatively new addition to the world of crates, the soft-sided crate, is made of a mesh fabric stretched onto a frame. The door portion zips closed. This type of crate has become very popular, especially ringside at dog shows, and there are a variety of styles and price ranges.

Soft crates set up and fold up easily, store easily, and are wonderfully easy to carry around because of their light weight. These factors have made them a favorite among the dog show crowd ringside.

Soft crates should not be used with every dog. Even for appropriate dogs, there is what I call “the learning curve”. If a Dane is used to being in a wire crate, he most likely has learned he can lean against the side and there will be support. The first time he does that in a soft crate, it will tip over. This can be extremely upsetting for the dog and make him or her permanently shy of entering a soft crate. A little training is required when acclimating an adult Dane to a soft crate. I generally suggest it first be set up at home at a time you can supervise its use. If you see the dog leaning on the crate (and before he tips it over) give him the “down” command and then reward that behavior. Sometimes I have to tap rather firmly on the side of the crate so the dog gets the idea to not lean. Given some time, the dog will soon learn that leaning on the crate is not a safe thing to do.

Soft crates do have several drawbacks:

While young puppies generally acclimate quite well to a soft crate, one must beware of a puppy’s desire to chew anything in reach. As soft crates are only just fabric, if your Dane is a chewer (as even many adults are), he will quickly eat a hole through the fabric and the crate just became an expensive chew toy. So, unless you know your Dane is trustworthy in the chewing department, don’t use a soft crate.

Ventilation is an issue on hot days. The mesh fabric simply does not let much air through as a wire crate does. If you are using a soft crate during hot weather, extra care must be used to assure your Dane does not overheat.

Lack of security is the biggest drawback of soft crates. They are definitely a crate to be used only under direct supervision. Because the door (which is the entire front) only zips shut, it's easy for a Dane to pop the front open if there is an incentive. And, if that "incentive" happens to be an expensive small fluffy dog at a dog show, you may rue the day you ever used a soft crate.

Used properly, soft crates have their place, but before you choose one, make sure you know your needs and your dog's suitability for one. Of course it goes without saying that you would never put a dog-aggressive Dane into a soft crate at a dog show.

What Size?

When choosing a crate for your Dane, you need to take into consideration his size and level of training.

A young, un-housebroken Dane puppy should be put into a crate that gives him only enough room to stand up, turn around, and lie down in. Confining the puppy to this small area will help to keep him clean and speed up housebreaking dramatically. (Please see the section on housebreaking elsewhere in this booklet.)

When the dog is suitably housetrained, he needs more room. The crate should be large enough to allow him to turn around and to comfortably lie down. Height is not so much a factor as is width and length. After all, when a dog is in his crate, you want him lying down, not standing up.

A "standard" Dane crate is approximately 48" long by 30" wide by approximately 35" tall. This size usually works for most bitches and smaller males. This is the size most people use in their houses, in vehicles and ringside at dog shows.

Larger crates offering a more spacious area are also available. Made only in the pin-style because of their large size, they are suitable for the owner who wants to confine their Dane but also provide as much space as possible. Two types of these larger crates are available:

Midwest Metal makes a “Colossal” crate, and to my knowledge it is the largest manufactured crate on the market. This crate is approximately 54” long by 45” tall by 36” wide and offers ample room for even the biggest Dane. It comes with a divider. The pan is generally plastic and sometimes has to be purchased separately. Side doors are available.

Precision Pet makes an extra-large crate, model #7000. This crate is approximately 53” long by 42” tall by 33” wide. This crate is perfect for the household who wants a large crate but which doesn’t have quite enough room for a colossal. The crate is black epoxy, has a sturdy galvanized pan, and a gate panel with three latches instead of the standard two.

Crate Safety

- Be sure to always shut all the latches on your crate when the door is closed. Don’t get lazy and shut only the top one. A Dane may try to squeeze through the unlatched portion and get caught.
- Collars always need to be removed prior to going into a crate. A dog wearing a collar, especially in a wire crate, may become entangled on some portion of the crate and could strangle himself in his struggle to get free.
- Extra care should be used when putting cropped puppies wearing ear racks into wire crates, as the rack could become stuck in the wire slates. A better option would be the use of a molded plastic crate during this stage of the puppy’s life and also use the cup method of ear support.
- Carefully examine the front portion below the gate. Often Danes get toes caught in this part. If there appears to be sufficient gaps between the wire to catch a toe, face that area with a piece of plywood cut to size and firmly fastened into place, or roll up several towels and stuff them into the gap.

Crate Tips

- If you need to replace the pan in your crate consider cutting a piece of plywood to fit.
- Another idea for replacing the pan in your crate is to purchase a stall mat, available at tack and horse stores, and cut it to size. This actually makes a very nice floor. The dense rubber is difficult to chew, and the mat gives more resiliency than a metal, wood or plastic floor would.

- Bedding in a crate can vary. You can buy fleece crate pads in various colors, or use small rugs (bath types with rubberized backing are best), or simply get comforters from thrift stores. Your choice depends on your dog's preferences and chewing tendencies and your budget. The only hard and fast requirements are that it be washable; suitable for the weather of the season; and not dangerous if it is shredded or eaten!

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