



# DOG TRAINING

*Helping you and your dog become best friends for life.*

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## **HOUSETRAINING**

Training your puppy or dog not to urinate or defecate in your house should begin as soon as you bring them into your home.

The same process used to housetrain a puppy can also be used with an older dog that is not housetrained or that develops housetraining issues. If you have an older dog that you thought was previously housetrained but is now having issues, the first thing you should do is make an appointment with your veterinarian. It is highly likely that your dogs housetraining problem is not behavioral, but medical in nature.

With young puppies, a major factor in housetraining will be the size of their growing bladder and their control over it. A puppy that is under 10 weeks of age may need to go out every hour during the day and possibly once or twice every night. This is not necessarily a matter of training but one of bladder control. By 12 weeks a puppy should be able to go up to 2 hours during the day without urinating and can usually make it through the night. When a puppy is 16 to 20 weeks of age, it should only need to go out every 4 hours during the day. Most dogs can eventually go up to 8 hours during the day between eliminations.

## **Crate Training**

The first step in housetraining your puppy will be to get a crate. I recommend a fiberglass/plastic "airline" type crate. These crates are enclosed on all sides and provide a den-like atmosphere for your dog. If you prefer a wire crate, drape a cloth over the sides to make it more like a den.

A crate should be large enough for your dog to sit up, lie down and turn around comfortably. However, the dog should not have enough room to sleep in one corner and eliminate in the other. Usually it is most economical to purchase the size crate that will fit your puppy as an adult. For the time being you can place an old milk crate or some other object in the back of the crate to take up some space.

There are beds specifically made for dog crates, but I do not recommend them for young puppies. An old blanket or some towels will do just fine. A couple of good chew toys will occupy a young dog's time in the crate. While you are housetraining your dog you should not offer water in the crate, but do make sure it is available at all other times.

Generally the crate should be placed in an area that is quiet, but where your dog can still see and hear you. Remember, dogs are social animals and want to be with the rest of the family. They do not like feeling isolated. Putting the crate in your bedroom at night

will help to strengthen the bond between you and your dog by allowing him to sleep near you. You may have a couple of sleepless nights initially, but it is worth it in the end. Having the dog near you while you sleep will also aid you in hearing the puppy when he needs to eliminate during the night.

It is very important not to abuse the crate. We want the dog to like the crate so it should never be used for punishment. If your dog spends a significant amount of time in a crate it will also need a significant amount of time to exercise and play.

### **Introducing the dog to the crate**

1. Open the door to the crate and let your dog explore it. Toss in a treat or a favorite toy so he goes in to investigate.
2. Pick a word such as "kennel" and put your dog in its crate and leave. Return a couple of minutes later and let him out. Never make a big deal of crating your dog. If you act as though it is nothing your dog will accept the idea much more quickly.
3. Break your dog in gradually. Start with a couple of minutes and then increase the time from there.
4. If your dog is barking, ignore him. Otherwise he will learn that by barking he will get his way. However, if he whines in the middle of the night, he may have to go outside. In this case take him out immediately and then put him back in the crate for the remainder of the night.

The happier you are with the crate, the happier your dog will be. You will be amazed at how rapidly dogs come to like their new home.

### **Diet and Housetraining**

Your puppy's diet will have a large impact on housetraining. The quality of what goes in will greatly affect the quantity of what comes out. The frequency of feeding will also have an effect on how often your dog needs to eliminate. By feeding at set intervals you will make bowel movements much more predictable. I recommend you feed a puppy 3 times a day. Set the food down for 15 minutes and if anything is left, pick it up and put it away until the next meal.

### **The Housetraining Process**

Until such time that your dog has been housetrained (12 weeks without an accident), they should always be in a crate, on a leash attached to you, or under **constant** supervision. You must not take your eye off the puppy if you want to prevent accidents. This means that if a responsible adult is not devoting **100%** of their attention to the puppy, then the puppy should be in its crate. When I say 100%, I really mean 100%. You cannot adequately supervise the puppy if you are trying to read, watch TV, or talk on the phone at the same time.

It is essential that you do not allow the puppy to have an accident inside. Every accident the puppy has provides positive reinforcement, in the form of relief, for eliminating inside. Positive reinforcement causes behaviors to be repeated, something we do not want in this circumstance.

You should take your puppy out to eliminate whenever:

- They finish a meal or snack.
- They awake from sleeping.
- They come out of the crate, whether they have been sleeping or not.
- Immediately before and after play sessions.
- Any time the dog's behavior suggests they may need to go out (circling, sniffing, and sitting by a door).

When taking your puppy or dog out to eliminate, follow these steps:

- Put your dog on a leash, 6ft in length or less, so you have control over them outside. You need to stay out with them, so dress appropriately.
- Always go out the same door. This will help them to identify why they are going out.
- Go directly to the area in your yard you have selected as the elimination area. This area should be fairly close to the door so you can get there in a hurry when necessary. Dogs tend to favor porous surfaces so they will generally prefer to eliminate on a grassy area. After your puppy defecates here the first time, leave some stool for the first few days to serve as a marker that this is the place to go.
- Remain standing in one place. When the dog starts to eliminate say "good," remain silent and allow them to finish. Give them a treat and lots of praise immediately after they have finished. This treat needs to be delivered within 5 seconds of the dog completing the behavior, if it is to be associated with the behavior. If you wait to give the puppy the treat until after you get back inside, you are NOT rewarding for the bathroom behavior but for coming inside. This may create a puppy that is in a hurry to get inside and thus does not finish going to the bathroom outside, but does so inside. After your puppy is finished eliminating, then it is time for play or a walk.
- After your dog is eliminating in the same spot you can start to add a verbal cue. When your dog starts to eliminate, repeat the word you want to use for elimination ("Do you business," "Go Potty," etc.). Always use the same phrase as we eventually will use this to get our dog to eliminate on command.
- Give your dog up to 10 minutes to eliminate. If a puppy, wait an additional 2 minutes after they have eliminated just in case they have not finished. If they eliminate again, reward them with another treat.
- If your dog does not eliminate after 10 minutes go directly back inside with no play, walk or treat. Remembering that you have a "loaded" puppy, either put them in their crate or keep them attached to you by a leash. If he starts to whine in the crate or shows any pre-elimination behaviors immediately take him outside.
- Once your puppy is going reliably in his special place you should start training them to go on command in other places. If you stay at Grandma's be prepared for the possibility of an accident. You need to watch your puppy closely in new situations and may need to do some remedial training.

## **When Accidents Happen**

No matter how good you and your puppy are, the odds are there will be some accidents in the house. If the puppy starts to eliminate inside, say their name sharply. This should get their attention and cause them to momentarily stop. Quickly scoop them up or leash them and take them outside, following the steps above.

If an accident occurs in the house and you did not actually catch the puppy at the instant it was eliminating, just quietly put him in the crate while you clean up the mess. If you punish the dog after the fact it will not understand why it is being punished. If you think your dog “looks guilty” and knows it has done something wrong, your dog is picking up on your negative body language. He senses you are upset but does not understand why.

Be careful about reprimanding your puppy even if you catch them in the act. Rather than associating your punishment with going inside they may associate it with eliminating in front of you which can make housetraining even more difficult.

When your dog has an accident inside it is imperative you clean it thoroughly. Any residual feces or urine may trigger the puppy to eliminate in that specific location again. We recommend that you use an enzymatic based cleaning product such as such as Urine Off, Nature’s Miracle or PureAyre™. These products contain enzymes which break down the urine crystals that “mark” a spot as an appropriate bathroom area. Many household cleaners only cover the smell left behind and do not breakdown the urine. Do NOT use ammonia-based cleaners, as to many dogs these may actually smell like urine.

## **Things You Do Not Want to Do**

### **Walking to Eliminate**

Taking your dog for a walk to eliminate may actually make housetraining more difficult. Most dogs enjoy walks and if they learn that the walk ends when they eliminate, they may delay eliminating in order to extend the walk. It is easier to teach that eliminating quickly at home results in a fun walk.

### **Paper Training**

Training your dog to go inside on newspapers will make the entire housetraining process more difficult and lengthy. Every time a dog goes inside on a newspaper he is learning and being positively reinforced for going inside. Training him to only go outside after this has been allowed is extremely challenging.

## **Housetraining Issues with Adult Dogs**

### **Marking**

Upon reaching sexual maturity, many male dogs and some female dogs exhibit marking behavior. They urinate on objects to leave their scent, thus staking out their territory. Remedial housetraining may be necessary in these cases. Early neutering of males, before this behavior develops, may help prevent this behavior from developing. Many veterinarians can neuter and spay puppies at 8 weeks of age.

## **Illness**

If an adult dog with a good record of housetraining suddenly starts having accidents, take them to your veterinarian. Urinary infections or cystitis can cause a dog to urinate inside. Internal parasites or other illnesses can cause diarrhea or increase the frequency of defecation.