



Housebreaking

Beginning Housebreaking

Now that you have obtained a puppy, you have a very important job ahead of you. Housebreaking is a challenging but rewarding experience when done successfully. The following information will help you to understand the habits of your puppy, and assist you in teaching him where to urinate and defecate. A routine, constant supervision when you are at home, and confinement when you are not, will have most dogs housebroken within 12 weeks.

A puppy that is new to your home will need time to adjust. This can take up to three months, depending on the puppy's age and level of confidence. Each puppy is an individual and will respond differently to having new caretakers, living in a new environment (indoors and out), and getting used to a new routine. Changes in diet and exercise, anxiety, and excitability are all factors that will affect your puppy's behavior.

Taking Your Puppy Potty

At first, only take your puppy outdoors when it is potty time. If you have to wait for an elevator or walk a long way, carry the puppy or walk quickly, giving no time for the puppy to stop. Go directly to the spot you have chosen for his potty place, use the verbal command you have chosen, and repeat it over and over until you have success. Do not let the puppy leave the area you have chosen for his potty place. Upon success, immediately reward your puppy with plenty of praise and a little treat. Give the puppy only about ten minutes to get the job done. Once he does his business, you can then go for a walk or have a little playtime. If the puppy does not go, or does not completely empty out, return him to his crate, and try taking him out again in about a half an hour.

Whenever a puppy eats or drinks, he sets in motion a digestive sequence that often ends up with elimination. Shortly after finishing his meal, the puppy will have to go to the bathroom. This can be anywhere within a 30-minute period. So, when he's done eating, don't let him roam all over the house and don't let him out of your sight. Watch for signs that the puppy has to relieve himself. Intense sniffing, pacing back and forth, and/or circling are signs that he "has to go."

If you feed your puppy at the same time each day, you will be able to see a clear pattern of behavior develop. The number of meals per day that you feed the puppy will figure into the total number of times you can expect to have to take him out on a toilet mission. Feeding a highly digestible, premium formula food greatly assists in getting and keeping the puppy on a schedule. Young and/or small puppies need to be fed more often than older/larger puppies.

Suggested Feeding Schedule:

Very young or small puppies – 4 times a day
Puppies 3 to 6 months – 3 times a day
Puppies 7 months to adult – 2 times a day

Puppies usually need to urinate after waking from a nap or an overnight sleep. Once again, supervision is the key. If you don't see the puppy wake up, you may miss seeing him relieve himself. Always be in a position to be able to hurry the puppy outdoors. Vigorous play can stimulate a puppy to urinate as well. A puppy may have trouble controlling the urge. He may squat suddenly, urinate and then resume play. Watch carefully, often sniffing the ground or floor as he circles will be the only sign. **Generally speaking, a puppy has the capability of holding one hour for every month of age.**

Some dogs use urine and feces to mark territorial boundaries. Even a young puppy may feel compelled to establish and protect his territory. This type of soiling (not related to normal elimination) can happen during the night if you sleep in separate quarters from the dog, or when you leave the dog alone in the house. Dogs are quite social. Many puppies become stressed and anxious when separated from their family. Un-neutered males often lift their leg indoors, not because they have to go, but rather as a way of posting a "No Trespassing" sign. **BE SURE TO GET A MALE PUPPY NEUTERED BEFORE HE REACHES SEXUAL MATURITY.** We recommend neutering be done between 6-7 months of age. Waiting to neuter until one or more years of age may not correct what has become a habit in marking territory. There are health benefits to neutering as well.

"Caught You in the Act!"

If you catch your puppy in the act, a deep firm "NO" is all that is needed to communicate your displeasure. If you succeeded in interrupting the act, get the puppy outdoors quickly and clean up when you get back. Hitting the puppy or rubbing his face in his waste is not necessary. Intimidation tactics work against relationships based on mutual trust and respect. Puppies love praise and want to please their masters. Supervision and consistency are essential. The puppy is always learning, even when you are not actively teaching. A puppy that is improperly supervised (you find more accidents than you see happen) may become confused as to whether or not he may eliminate indoors. Sometimes he gets yelled at and sometimes he doesn't. A puppy that is carefully monitored understands very quickly what he may and may not do and usually becomes reliable much more quickly.

If you missed the event, when the puppy is very young, all you can do is clean it up and vow to be more diligent in watching. Correction is useless because the puppy does not remember doing it. Once the puppy is older, recognizes his smell, and remembers the command you use for elimination, you can take him to the accident and firmly scold him and reinforce verbally that he "goes potty outside." When you cannot supervise the puppy, he should be crated or confined to a small, dog-proofed area.

Clean Up!

Clean up all accidents with a commercial odor neutralizer. This type of product, which is available in pet stores and catalogs, breaks down the organic matter that causes the odor. Normal household cleaners will not neutralize the odor. If there is any residual odor left after cleaning, chances are good that the puppy will return to the spot again. Be sure to use the product correctly, or it will not work.

Paper Training/Litterboxes

If you are thinking about paper training, consider what the end result is that you want for your puppy. Teaching a dog to eliminate indoors can cause confusion when he is away from home. Unless the dog is carefully trained to respond to a specific set of cues, he may have indoor accidents where you are visiting! Un-neutered males are particularly difficult to paper train because they want to lift their leg and leave their scent in many different places. Unneutered males must be trained to use only one indoor scent post. Some people are now experimenting with litter boxes. Again, it may work very well at home, but if you want your puppy to travel with you, you may have problems when away from home.