

Successful Housetraining for Puppies and Adult Dogs

Dogs are basically clean animals; they don't like to spend time where they've urinated or defecated. Some dogs adopted as adults may need a refresher course in housetraining. The same rules apply to re-training an adult dog and training a puppy.

Steps to Successful Housetraining

1. Establish a schedule. Keep meals and water on a schedule and provide potty breaks accordingly. Your dog should be taken outside shortly after eating or drinking. He should also be taken out immediately following naps and play sessions.
2. Go out with your puppy. When the puppy gets to the area previously designated by you to be the potty area, give a command indicating the pup should eliminate. When he goes, praise him and give him a treat.
3. When in the house, watch your puppy at all times. If you can't be with your dog, confine him to a crate. (See handout, "Crate Training Your Dog") Dogs don't like to soil in their "dens" so they aren't likely to use their crate to eliminate. Take your dog out of the crate at regular intervals and directly outside. Praise him if he goes to the bathroom; if he doesn't, bring him back inside and either watch him closely or put him back in the crate for a little while longer. Then, back outside. Watch for sniffing and circling... that usually means your pup's ready to eliminate.
4. If you catch your dog urinating or defecating inside, interrupt by clapping your hands. Get him outside and give a command to go. Praise him and give a treat if he goes outside. ***Never physically punish your dog for inappropriate elimination.*** Your dog will associate you with the punishment and will not want to go in front of you. This may ruin your chances to praise your dog for going in the correct area because the dog is now afraid to eliminate in front of you!

The following steps should make it relatively easy to housetrain your pup. Remember, the keys are consistency, supervision, crate training and sticking to a schedule.

Troubleshooting

Problem: the dog won't go outside in front of you, but will immediately sneak into another room to eliminate.

Solution: first, don't forget about the crate. If the pup won't go outside, put him back in the crate for 15 minutes to half an hour; then take him outside again. Also, your dog may not feel comfortable eliminating in front of you.

If you keep him with you in the house and go out with him, he will eventually have to go (hopefully outside). In this case it's very important to praise him when he goes where he should. Be careful in this situation to avoid strong reprimands if accidents happen in the house.

Problem: the dog is eliminating in the crate.

Solution: Be sure to give your dog plenty of opportunities to go outside. Don't expect a puppy under four months of age to be able to "hold it" for much longer than 3-4 hours. Dogs don't like to lay where they've eliminated, so your crate should be just big enough for your dog to stand up, turn around and lay down comfortably. If the crate is too big, your puppy may urinate or defecate in one corner and lay in the other, therefore defeating the purpose of the crate as a house training tool. Also, as tempting as it is to put a nice, soft blanket in the crate, this should be avoided during the house training period. Your dog may get in the habit of urinating on the blanket, which complicates house training.

Problem: You have an eight-week old puppy and you work full-time.

Solution: A typical puppy is not physically capable of holding urine in his bladder for eight hours until he is about four months old. If you have a puppy younger than that, either come home mid-day and let him out or arrange for a neighbor, friend or family member to let the dog out. This will be temporary, just until your puppy reaches four months of age.

If you cannot arrange for someone to let your puppy out, housetraining may take longer than normal since your puppy is learning to eliminate inside and you will have to break this habit later. In the event that you must leave a puppy under four months of age for a full day, you will need to give him enough room to eliminate and get away from it so he doesn't have to lay in urine or feces. As you can see, this is contrary to what was suggested as the ideal plan earlier, hence the reason it takes longer to housetrain.

The Kentucky Humane Society offers a variety of classes, seminars and private training opportunities designed to teach your dog manners, resolve problem behaviors, strengthen the bond between you and your pet, and ultimately ensure a lasting and **enjoyable** relationship. Please call (502) 366-3355 for more information.