



# Training



## Housebreaking Issues

One of the most common reasons people relinquish dogs into shelters or rescue is for behavior problems, and housebreaking is at the top of that list. Many of these tips can still be helpful if you have chosen to paper, litter or pad train your puppy, because praise, consistency and timing are important with all training.

The most successful potty training methods consist of four key elements:

1. Confinement
2. Consistency
3. Timing
4. Praise

### Confinement

Puppies (or dogs who don't yet understand the concept) need to be confined to facilitate the easiest potty training. The BEST and most effective place to confine is in a crate or cage. Most dogs do NOT want to eliminate where they live, therefore the crate needs to be just large enough for puppy to turn around and lay down. Anything larger will encourage a puppy to eliminate at one end and sleep in the other. If you use a crate sized for an adult you can partition it to a smaller size.

### Training and Praise

When I teach a new dog (or puppy) where to eliminate, I ALWAYS use a leash. Leashes keep your dog close to you, where you can supervise and control everything that happens. Puppies are easily distracted. A blowing leaf, new flower, stick or another animal - all can take a puppy's mind off the matter at hand. If you are nearby with the leash in hand, a gentle tug will redirect his attention. Leashes also help teach an AREA to eliminate. On leash, you can take the dog there every time, where the smells are an added reminder of why he's there.

I also teach words for elimination. When the puppy finally understands what the words mean, he will understand WHAT I want as well as WHEN I want it to happen. You can use ANY word or phrase you want to use consistently (such as, "hurry up", "do your business", "tinkles", "go potty", etc.).

As I take my dog outside on a leash, I start to teach him the word "OUTSIDE" also. "Let's go OUTSIDE!" "Do you have to go "OUTSIDE"? In time, the dog will learn that the word OUTSIDE is associated with elimination. Eventually you will be able to ask the dog "do you have to go OUTSIDE?" and get a response like barking, running to the door or tail wagging.

A slip-type leash is quick and easy to slip on the puppy to take him out. If the puppy isn't used to the leash yet, slip the leash on and carry the puppy from his crate to outside, saying the entire time "Do you want to go outside? Let's go outside! Outside! Outside! Yay! Outside!". Your emphasis should be on the word "OUTSIDE". Once outside, set puppy down and change your mantra to your word/phrase "Go Potty! Go Potty! Let's Go Potty!" Let puppy sniff and move around a little, but keep him in a specific area. Each time he gets distracted (leaf, squirrel, etc.) give the leash a tug and repeat "Go Potty!" The command is not said in a firm or angry way but not in a soft or pleading way either – you want an encouraging tone. When elimination occurs, use a happy tone and repeat "GOOD Go Potty! Yay! Go Potty!" I prefer to use WORDS ONLY to reinforce elimination, because petting or treats can interrupt the act. Verbal praise needs to happen DURING the act, not after! Usually dogs will urinate first, then defecate. You need to become familiar with your dog's habits so you can wait for defecation and use a command for it (i.e.; "more potty", "go poop", etc.).

## Timing

Puppies (and dogs) earn freedom by eliminating appropriately. The best time for a puppy to be out of his crate is right after eliminating appropriately outside. This free time will still need to be strictly supervised, so any inclination toward inappropriate elimination can be immediately addressed. Baby gates are great for limiting a puppy's area of freedom. A short, inexpensive leash (4 ft. or so) attached to the puppy's collar (ALWAYS SUPERVISED, of course) works well and enables the owner to catch a quick puppy without grabbing for him (which can create a fearful dog).

The BEST rule of thumb is to ANTICIPATE the need!

As a general rule, the length of time a puppy can be left confined in his crate without going outside is roughly equal to his age in months:

- 2 months old = 2 hours of confinement without a potty break
- 3 months old = 3 hours of confinement without a potty break
- 4 months old = 4 hours of confinement without a potty break

ANY time there is a change in activity - after waking, playing, or eating, a puppy MUST be taken outside immediately!

**Your puppy will also give certain indications each time he needs to eliminate: abrupt stop of play, circling, sniffing, running out of the room with a "look" on his face. You will eventually become familiar with these "warning signs".**

## Accidents

All is not lost if puppy eliminates in the house or in his crate! If you catch him in the act, make an abrupt noise (clap hands, say "Angh Angh") and use a firm low voice to illustrate your displeasure. "Bad dog! Bad! Outside to do this!" (voice starts to get friendlier now) "Let's go OUTSIDE! Outside!" (now in normal command voice) "Go Potty. GOOD DOG go potty!" Then use a lot of cheerful praise if he finishes outside.

Remember, you **MUST catch puppy IN THE ACT** of inappropriate elimination to facilitate an effective lesson. Rubbing his nose in "it" afterward (even just a few moments later) only teaches him that "doo doo" in the house gets him in trouble.

"Oh no", you say, "my dog KNOWS!". Well, not really. A behaviorist once told me he illustrated this to a skeptical client by sending the client out of the house while he collected stool from the backyard and set it in the middle of the living room. The client was invited back into the house and the dog ran and hid! Here's another example of how dogs think: Puppy poops where he shouldn't and wanders into another room to quietly chew a bone. The owner finds the poop, locates the puppy and drags him to the mess and stuffs his nose in it. Puppy wonders, "I was off chewing my bone and now I'm getting my nose shoved into this mess! I just don't get it! I get punished for chewing my bone?"

**TIMING** ... of catching the puppy in the act in order to correct and teach ... or of the **PRAISE** for appropriate elimination ... is everything and **CONSISTENCY** is the key! Proper behavior must be praised **EVERY TIME** you give a command and it is followed. I still do it with my 9 year old!

One last thought to ponder while dealing with the frustrations of potty training:

..... a puppy that has **NEVER** eliminated in the house and been **CAUGHT** and **CORRECTED** has not yet learned that it is wrong. There **MUST** be "accidents" in order for **REAL** learning to take place!

## Common Questions...

### ***"My puppy goes outside, then comes in and poops on the floor!"***

You, as the owner/trainer, are at fault here. You are missing the two **BIG** keys in successful potty training: 1- You **MUST** accompany your puppy outside **WITH** a leash on to supervise elimination and 2- Freedom in the house is only earned by appropriate elimination outside. No pees or poos - **NO FREEDOM**, and puppy goes back in his crate. Next, the owner checks again in a time frame of 20 minutes to an hour and takes puppy outside on the **LEASH** for another opportunity to eliminate appropriately and earn freedom.

### ***"I stand at the door and watch while my puppy goes potty outside. When he is finished and comes back in, he gets a treat. Why do I have to go out with my puppy?"***

Your puppy is getting his treat for coming back into the house, **NOT** for appropriate elimination. Praise **MUST** happen **DURING** elimination to make the connection in puppy's mind. Some dogs will run outside and run back in without eliminating because they know they'll get a treat. This can also encourage frequent demands to go out - just so they can get a treat when they come in!

### ***"I leave my puppy outside to play for an hour or more, then I bring him in and he eliminates. Why couldn't he just do it while he was outside?"***

Well, he may have eliminated when he first went out, but he didn't have to go later, and he certainly doesn't have the human capacity to think, "Well, my owner is probably going to take me inside soon, so I'd better get my business done while I'm outside!" **YOU** need to remind a puppy who has been outside for a while to "Go Potty!".

### ***"When will I know if my dog is housebroken?"***

Appropriate elimination **FIRST** happens primarily because we, as owners, control it. We are working, when we potty train, to establish a **HABIT**, and that will usually take two to three months, depending on how consistent and persistent you are as the owner/trainer.

### ***"My puppy wakes me up at 3 am EVERY NIGHT! I take him out, he pees and then wants to play. I play with him for a while and put him back in his crate where he cries for some time before he settles down. How do I break him of this?"***

Nighttime needs should diminish quickly as the puppy gets older. At first, you may need to get up 2-3 times nightly for a 7-week-old pup. That frequency should quickly reduce to once a night for a 9-week-old pup. When a puppy cries in the night, you DO have to check on him - it's the only way he has to tell you there is a problem. YOU will soon learn which cries are "fussing" and which indicate a real need. Remember when I said you are working to establish a HABIT when potty training? Well, if you get up during the night to take puppy out and then play with him, you are establishing a nighttime play routine habit! Any nighttime trips outside should be all "business only": outside then back in the crate - PERIOD! Temporarily removing access to water by 7 or 8 p.m. will also help.

### **Special problems...**

Dogs or puppies purchased from a pet shop or other place where they were always kept in a small cage never had a choice and HAD to eliminate where they lived. Owners must devote extra time to take such dogs outside more frequently in order to get elimination outside rather than in the crate. Elaborate praise when they "go" is essential so they learn that life is better all around when they eliminate outside. Elimination in the crate should be ignored and just cleaned up at first - with no correction or harsh words. Later, as the dog starts to understand "going outside" a little better, the same corrections used when your dog has an accident on the floor (see "Accidents" above) can be used for crate soiling. Training these dogs takes a lot of patience and time.

### **Submissive Urination**

***"When I come home from work and let my dog out of her crate, she urinates all over when I'm greeting her. I yell at her and she pees more! Why does she DO that?"***

What your dog is doing is called submissive urination. It is NOT a housebreaking problem. She is telling you that she recognizes that you are the leader. When you yell at her, she pees more to say "Yes, I KNOW that you are alpha!" Usually submissive urination resolves by 2 years of age, but some dogs continue the behavior their entire lives.

Things you can do to deter submissive urination:

DO NOT bend over the top of the dog, especially when greeting. That is a dominant position.

For some reason, sweet, happy talk makes dogs urinate - so happy greetings with a lot of conversation should be avoided.

DO NOT pet your dog to greet her - the best thing to do when greeting a submissive urinator is to fold your arms across your chest, turn and ignore, but encourage your dog to go outside right away. Praise when she urinates outside, and then you should be able to greet.

When visitors come over, have them greet your dog (on leash) outside on the porch or grass to avoid messes in the house.

DO NOT yell at your dog for being "bad" - this isn't being "bad" at all! It is dog language affirming your leadership.

### **Spitefulness?**

***"When I leave the house, my dog frequently leaves me "presents" of stool and/or urine. I know he hates me to leave, and I'm sure he's doing it out of spite."***

Dogs by nature are not spiteful animals. That is too much of a human emotion and requires too much reasoning: "If she leaves, then I'm going to poop on the floor because I know she HATES that! That'll teach her to leave me here alone!"

If there is an accident when the owner is gone, these are usually the real reasons:

I just forgot to do my business outside. (This is where my own dogs fit in!)

I'm really not reliably potty trained and don't completely understand the concept.

I waited by the door to go outside but I couldn't get out and I just couldn't wait any longer!

You left me all alone in this house! This is a BIG job, and we usually watch over the house together as a pack. This is too stressful for me. I'm so stressed I have to poop!

I have too much freedom - and too soon - without supervision.

If you come home to accidents, you need to consider these steps:

Backtrack on potty training - no matter what your dog's age.

Reduce the space of freedom - either with a crate, baby gates or a room.

Back to outside supervised potty breaks - with leash on so praise can be used at the right time.

Make sure there is no physical cause for the problem (intestinal parasites, urinary tract infection, etc.)

## **Questions to ask yourself if you are having problems...**

Am I taking the dog out enough?

Do I know every time he goes?

Does he have too much freedom in the house?

Am I watching him carefully when he is free in the house?

Is there any physical reason (intestinal parasites, urinary tract infection, etc.)?

Am I trying to move things along faster than this dog is able to learn - skipping steps so the entire picture is unclear to my dog?

Am I consistently praising for appropriate behavior so he gets the idea?

One last suggestion .... when you start feeling confident that your pup knows the ropes and hasn't had an

accident for several weeks, don't slack off yet. Continue your training for an additional few weeks or even months to prevent any relapses.

Good luck with your efforts. They will pay off in the long run with a happy and reliable pup.

**For Other Training tips, visit these sites.**

<http://www.purina.com/dogs/behavior.asp>

<http://www.dogtrainingreview.com/>

<http://www.uwsp.edu/psych/dog/dog.htm>

<http://www.inch.com/~dogs/articles.html>

<http://www.perfectpaws.com/>

<http://www.inch.com/~dogs/training.html>

<http://www.dogpatch.org/obed/obpage2.cfm>