

Tips on House Training Your New Puppy

Frequently a puppy becomes a member of a household that is unaccustomed to the behavior of a canine baby. A puppy might be the first pet in the home, the companion for an older dog or a replacement to fill the spot of a deceased pet. The introduction of a puppy into a home can create chaos or, with proper training of the animal, result in a loving human-animal bond.

Of all a puppy's lessons, the learning of acceptable toilet habits is a priority. The number one rule to remember during a dog's adolescence is that accidents will happen despite the most conscientious efforts of the owner. These accidents are not purposeful attempts by the pet to get even with the owner. Instead, they represent a skill not yet mastered by the dog or, often, unreasonable expectations from the owner. Areas such as carpeting must, from the beginning, be designated as off limits until the puppy is thoroughly trained. When frustrated it is well to remember the years it took our mothers to potty train us and be more tolerant and understanding of man's best friend.

Patience and consistency are essential. It is a common mistake to take the puppy out for a few minutes, returning to the house just when the puppy is ready to defecate (have a bowel movement). This happens most often during inclement weather when neither the puppy or the owner wants to stay outside or when the owner is in too much of a hurry. Make sure the puppy has completed urinating and defecating before it comes back indoors.

Housebreaking should begin when the puppy is between 8 and 16 weeks old and capable of learning short lessons. Simplified house training involves adherence to a schedule, a confined bedding area and lavish amounts of verbal praise and rewards.

There are four times a puppy typically eliminates:

1. A puppy usually eliminates soon after it wakes up. For example, a puppy will urinate after a nap. It is important to remember that puppies sleep several times a day and thus have several waking periods.
2. After eating. With three or four feedings each day, young puppies require a considerable number of trips outside.
3. Intense activity by the dog stimulates elimination.
4. Dogs normally eliminate before bedding down at night. Strict schedules for resting, eating and playing will help regulate the elimination process.

When family members do not have regular schedules, the puppy's schedule is unfortunately not regular either. In households where the puppy is left alone for long periods the pet tends to sleep most of the time. Occasionally accidents will happen because at this age the puppy's bladder has a very small capacity.

When alone, the young dog should be confined in a small area like a bathroom, utility room or a large crate. The confined area should be large enough for a water bowl and clearly defined bedding area; yet limit the amount of area in which accidents can happen. Dogs prefer not to soil their dens and tend to retain their urine and feces until they have access to another location. It will be important to take the puppy outside immediately upon letting him out of the area. Neither

puppies nor young dogs should be confined for more than two or three hours at a time.

Dogs learn to prefer one surface for elimination to the exclusion of all other. Newspaper, grass, concrete, or asphalt commonly becomes the chosen surface. Dogs expected to eliminate outdoors as adults should learn that as puppies. Do not start them on newspaper and expect them to make the adjustment later. When dogs are raised outside and allowed to come indoors, shag carpeting is the surface most closely resembling grass.

Praise is a strong motivation to reinforce the learning process in a dog. The effective memory span for a puppy is no longer than 30 seconds, so praise is best given when he/she is actually eliminating. This means going out with the puppy during this learning process. The word no is a sufficient negative response to accidents. Lavishly praise the dog when it eliminates in the designated area. **Never Never Never** hit a dog or rub its nose in its urine or feces.

Housebreaking becomes a simple procedure when the owner is properly informed about the importance of maintaining a schedule, confining the puppy properly and praising the animal for appropriate behavior.