

Tips for Houstraining Puppies and Dogs

As with most things in life, there are right and wrong ways to get things done. Rubbing a puppy's nose in a mess is not the right way to houstrain. Using ample amounts of supervision and positive reinforcement is. Use the following puppy house training tips to get started on the road to proper puppy potty training.

Getting On the Right Track

The first course of action in houstraining is to promote the desired behavior. You need to:

- Designate a potty area outdoors.
- Guide your dog there to do his business.
- Heartily praise him when he goes.

The odor left from previous visits to that area will quickly mark it as the place for the pup to do his business.

Timing Is Important!

An eight to ten week-old puppy should be taken outdoors every one to two hours. Older puppies can generally wait longer between outings. Most puppies should be taken out:

- After waking in the morning
- After naps
- After meals
- After playing or training
- After being left alone
- Immediately before being put to bed

Potting on Command

To avoid spending a lot of time waiting for your puppy to go, you may want to teach him to potty on command. Each time he is in the act of eliminating, simply repeat a unique command, such as "hurry up" or "Go potty," in an upbeat tone of voice. After a few weeks of training, you'll notice that when you say the command your puppy will begin pre-potty sniffing, circling and then potty shortly after you give the command. Be sure to praise him for his accomplishments.

Feeding Schedules

Most puppies will potty within an hour after eating. Once you set your puppy's feeding schedule, you will have some control over when he needs to go.

- Schedule your puppy's dinner times so that you will be available to let him out after eating.
- Avoid giving your puppy a large meal just prior to confining him or he may have to go when you're not around to take him out. Schedule feeding two to three times daily on a consistent schedule.

Have food available for only 15 to 20 minutes, then remove it.

- The last feeding of the day should be done several hours before he's confined for the night. By controlling the feeding schedule, exercise sessions, confinement periods and trips outdoors to the potty area, your puppy will quickly develop a reliable schedule for pottying.

Crate Training

This is one of the best puppy house training tips we have to offer. Training a puppy to be comfortable in a crate is a good way to keep him safe and confined during housetraining. Most puppies will quickly accept crate confinement when you make the introduction fun. Since it's important to associate favorable things with the area where your puppy is confined, it is a good idea to play with him there, or simply spend some time reading or watching television nearby as he relaxes with a favorite chew toy. If he is only in the area when you leave, it becomes a social isolation area that he eventually may resist entering.

A good time to start crate training is at dinnertime. Feed your puppy his dinner, one piece at a time, by tossing pieces of kibble into the crate for him to chase and eat. This way, you can make a game out of training.

When you pick up his toys, store them in the crate so he will enter on his own to play. You may even want to occasionally hide a biscuit in the crate as a nice surprise.

You should not use the crate for periods that exceed the length of time the pet can actually control the urge to urinate or defecate. If you are gone for long periods each day, you will need to provide a larger confinement area. You may want to consider using an exercise pen or small room.

Expect Some Mistakes

Left on his own, the untrained puppy is very likely to make a mistake. Close supervision is a very important part of training. Do not consider your puppy housetrained until he has gone at least four consecutive weeks without pottying in the house. For older dogs, this period should be even longer. Until then:

- Your puppy should constantly be in your sight.
- Baby gates can be helpful to control movement throughout the house and to aid supervision.
- Keep them in the crate when unsupervised.

When you're away from home, sleeping or if you're just too busy to closely monitor your pet's activities, confine him to a small, safe area in the home.