



Housetraining Your Puppy

Housetraining a puppy can take time, patience, and commitment, but it will help to minimize house soiling incidents. However, it is inevitable that your puppy will have at least one accident in the house. This should be expected when raising a puppy. If you are very consistent with the housetraining procedures, your puppy will quickly learn the acceptable behaviors. It may take several weeks to housetrain your puppy and even longer for some of the smaller breeds. A puppy can be considered housetrained when they have not had any accidents for two to three months.

Establish a Routine

Your puppy will do best if they are taken outside on a consistent and frequent schedule. After napping, playing, and eating are good times to take your dog outside.

Choose a location not far from the door to be the bathroom spot. Always take your puppy directly to the spot on a leash. Then you can take your puppy on a walk or to play right after to associate good things with eliminating. If you clean up an accident in the house, put the soiled rags or paper towels in the bathroom spot outside. This will help your puppy recognize the area as a place to eliminate. While your puppy is eliminating, use words or phrases, such as “go potty,” that you can eventually use to remind your dog of what you want them to do. Praise your dog when they eliminate outside. You can even give them a treat. However, this must be done immediately so your dog knows what they are being praised for.

If possible, have a regular feeding schedule for your puppy. Depending on their age, puppies need to be fed three or four times a day. Feeding your puppy at the same times every day will make eliminating more consistent. This makes housetraining easier for both you and your puppy.

Supervision and Confinement

Don't give your dog an opportunity to soil in the house. You should watch your dog at all times when they are indoors. You can use a leash or baby gates to keep them near you. Watch for signs that they need to eliminate, such as sniffing around or circling. If you see these signs, take them outside to the bathroom spot. If your dog eliminates, praise them!

When you're unable to watch your dog closely, they should be confined to an area small enough that they won't want to eliminate there. It should be just big enough for them to comfortably stand, lie down, and turn around. This could be a bathroom or laundry room blocked off with a gate. A crate could also be an option. If your dog has spent several hours in confinement, when you let them out, take them directly to the bathroom spot and praise them when they eliminate.

Supervision and confinement are very important in helping to minimize the number of accidents your puppy has in the house. If you allow your puppy to eliminate frequently inside, they will get confused about where they should be eliminating, which will make the housetraining process last much longer.

Accidents

Most dogs, at some point, will have an accident in the house. This should be expected, as it can be a normal part of your dog adjusting to their new home. If you catch your dog in the act of going inside the house, make a noise to interrupt them (be careful not to scare your dog). Immediately take them to the bathroom spot outside and then praise them as they finish eliminating there. Do not punish your dog for eliminating in the house. Punishment after the fact will only make things worse. Simply clean up the mess.



Paper Training

A puppy under 6 months can't be expected to control their bladder for more than a few hours at a time. If you must be away from the house for more than four to five hours a day, now may not be a great time to get a puppy. However, if you have already committed to a puppy and have to be away for a long time each day, you'll need to train your puppy to eliminate in a specific place indoors. However, this will prolong the process of teaching your puppy to eliminate outdoors, and it may create a life-long surface preference for your dog. This means that if you train your dog to eliminate on newspaper, even as an adult, your dog may eliminate on any newspaper they find around the house.

When your puppy is left alone for long periods of time, keep them confined to an area with enough room for sleeping, playing, and eliminating. In the area designated for eliminating, you can use newspaper, a sod box, or litter. To make a sod box, place sod in a container, such as a child's plastic swimming pool. You can also find dog litter products at pet supply stores. If you clean up an accident in the house, put the soiled rags or paper towels in the bathroom spot. This will help your puppy recognize the area as a place to eliminate.

Other Types of House Soiling Problems

If you have consistently worked with your dog with these housetraining procedures and it doesn't work, there are many other reasons why your dog could be eliminating inside.

Medical Problems: House soiling can be caused by physical problems. See your vet to rule out possibilities of illness.

Fearful/ Excitement Urination: Some dogs, especially young ones, can lose control of their bladders when they feel threatened or get excited. This usually happens during greetings, intense play, or when they are about to be punished. Dogs with phobias can also lose control of their bowels as a result of dealing with something that scares them.

Urine-Marking: Dogs sometimes will eliminate to scent-mark. See Page 14 for more information.

Separation Anxiety: Dogs that get anxious when they are left alone may house soil as a result.

Surface Preferences: When a dog has been trained to eliminate on only one type of surface, such as newspapers, or has not been offered a variety of surfaces, such as being confined to one type of surface, a surface preference may develop. This behavior can be difficult to change but is often managed by ensuring the preference surface is offered both inside and outside.