

HOUSE TRAINING

Teaching your dog or puppy to eliminate at the right time and in the right place is one of the most important first steps you can take for a long, happy life together. House training your dog or puppy requires patience, commitment, consistency and positive reinforcement. Accidents are part of the process, but the more consistent you are with house training procedures, the faster your dog or puppy will learn where and when to go.

PREPARATION

Having the following on hand before you begin house training will make the process go much smoother:

- Crate (just large enough for your dog or puppy to lay down comfortably stretched out).
 - See Crate Training tip sheet for more information.
- Schedule (that includes bathroom times, walks, feeding, etc...).
- Designated bathroom spot outdoors.
- Really yummy treats (i.e. tiny bits of chicken, steak, cheese, lunch meat, etc...).
- Enzyme based cleaner specifically made for pet odors.

SUPERVISION

The first step to ensure house training is successful is to give her every opportunity to succeed by preventing accidents from happening in the first place. This is accomplished through supervision, and if you are unable to supervise, confinement. Supervising your dog or puppy allows you to recognize pre-elimination behaviors like sniffing, circling, pawing at the ground, squatting and restlessness, which helps prevent accidents. If you are unable to actively supervise your puppy or dog, you can confine her to her crate or tether her to you with a long leash.

ROUTINE

Establish a routine for your dog or puppy that includes set times for meals and bathroom breaks and also an area for elimination. If your dog or puppy eats on a set schedule, then she will be more likely to eliminate on a set schedule. Typically, a puppy will need to go outside every 30-60 minutes and an adult dog every two-three hours, as well as after eating or upon waking up.

Pick an area outside that will be the designated “bathroom area” and take her there on leash each time you go out. Give her a cue such as, “Go Potty” and walk back and forth in the area until she goes. **It is important that is she is on the leash and accompanied by someone so that she can be immediately rewarded for going to the bathroom in the right place.** If, after five-seven minutes, she has not eliminated, head back inside and supervise or confine her and try again in 30 minutes.

POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT

Be ready to reward your dog or puppy for eliminating where and when she is supposed to. Wait until she has finished going and then immediately reward her with tiny bits of a super yummy treat and praise. After she has gone, she can have “free time” for 30 minutes where she does not have to be as closely supervised. Use this time to engage in interactive play and/or training to further associate good things happening with going to the bathroom outside.



ACCIDENTS HAPPEN

If you catch your dog or puppy in mid-accident, interrupt her by saying, “Ooops” and immediately take her outside to finish her business. If she is small enough, carry her outside and put the leash on before you place her on the ground. If you catch an accident after-the-fact, simply clean it up and vow to better supervise (or confine) next time. Since most dogs and puppies are attracted to places where they’ve previously eliminated, consider taking an “accident” outside to your designated bathroom area.

It is very important to remember not to punish your dog or puppy for having an accident – either during the process or after-the-fact. Punishment will only teach her that it’s not okay to eliminate in your presence.

HOW LONG CAN SHE HOLD IT?

Puppies under the age of four months do not generally have the ability to control when they need to eliminate – by the time they “realize” they need to go, they’ve already gone. A good rule of thumb to go by is that a puppy can “hold it” for the amount of hours equal to her age in months. So a 2-month-old puppy can “hold it” for two hours maximum. Some small breed or very young puppies may only be able to “hold it,” on average, for 30 minutes. An adult dog can “hold it” much longer than a puppy, on average, for six-eight hours.

TROUBLESHOOTING

- I take her out and all she does is run and play and then when we go back inside she eliminates.
 - Make sure she is on leash when you are outside and there aren’t any obvious distractions near the bathroom area such as toys. Don’t interact with her during this time – simply walk back and forth in the bathroom area. Remember to reward her with treats and praise after she is finished.
- When I take her outside, she doesn’t eliminate.
 - If nothing happens after five-seven minutes, go back inside. Confine or supervise her and try again in 30 minutes. Repeat until she has gone.
- She eliminates when I take her outside but I keep finding accidents in the house.
 - She needs more supervision. If you can’t actively supervise her, confine her or tether her to you with a long leash. The more chances she has to practice eliminating in the house, the longer it will take to housetrain her.
- She eliminates in her crate.
 - The crate may be too large (i.e. she has room to eliminate on one end and sleep at the other) or she was confined too long. Ensure the crate is just big enough for her to lay down comfortably stretched out and set a timer to remind you to take her out.
- I want to train my dog or puppy to use potty pads. How do I do that?
 - The same house training procedures apply. To prevent your dog or puppy from chewing on the pad, use a potty pad frame or tray to keep the pad in place.
- My adult dog was house trained and all of a sudden she is having accidents in the house.
 - If your adult dog was previously house trained and is now all of a sudden having frequent accidents in the house, schedule a visit with your veterinarian for a health check-up.
- My male dog “marks” in the house.
 - If your male dog is intact, neutering may solve the problem. Thoroughly clean all soiled spots and go through the same house training procedures. If after completing the house training procedures, your dog is still marking in the house, consider consulting a veterinary behaviorist or certified dog trainer for help.

