

House Training Your Puppy or New Dog

Congratulations on your new dog! Whether you are welcoming home a new puppy or an older dog, house training will be your first training endeavor together. Dogs do not naturally know to eliminate outdoors; we need to teach them. They learn best through effective, positive methods that reinforce every successful outdoor attempt. Accidents will happen as a natural part of learning, but setbacks can be most effectively overcome if you reward every instance of correct behavior. Here are the most effective strategies to ensure the process is smooth and successful for both of you!

SUPERVISION AND CONFINEMENT

The best way to set up your new dog for house training success is to ensure he does not have an opportunity (or a need) to eliminate when indoors. Supervision is essential in these first weeks of house training. Set up a puppy zone within the active family areas of your home and use baby gates to restrict access to the rest of your house. For example, your puppy may have access to the puppy-proofed kitchen and family room of the house where he is part of the everyday family life and under your keen supervision. To ensure safety and prevent house training lapses when you cannot supervise, a smaller confinement area (a crate or exercise pen) can be setup within the puppy zone.

PLAN ROUTINE POTTY BREAKS

Young puppies are only capable of holding their bladder for a few hours at a time. The general rule of thumb for puppies is one hour plus the age of the puppy (in months). For example, your 3-month-old puppy may be able to hold his bladder for a maximum of 4 hours. Puppies and young adult dogs generally need to potty upon waking in the morning, after meals, playtime, naps, and before going to bed at night. Proactively venturing outdoors together at these times will facilitate opportunities to reinforce outdoor elimination.

REWARD EVERY SUCCESSFUL OUTDOOR ATTEMPT

In the early stage of teaching your dog where to potty, it is essential to reinforce every successful outdoor potty attempt with a high-value treat. Keep a stash of treats near the door to grab on your way outside. When your dog finishes pottying, *immediately* provide him a treat outdoors. It is essential to provide the treat outdoors to facilitate his understanding that pottying outside is a great choice. Provide additional reinforcement by engaging in a fun, unstructured playtime together. Go for a nice long walk, play a

game of tug indoors or out, or engage in any game that's fun for both of you. An "empty" puppy gives you the perfect opportunity to allow for increased (supervised) freedom and exploration outdoors or within his indoor puppy zone.

If an outdoor potty break is unsuccessful, return indoors for a few minutes and place your puppy in his crate or exercise pen with a favorite chew toy. After a few minutes, try another outdoor potty break. If successful, reinforce outdoors with your treat and enjoy some relaxed playtime together.

ACCIDENTS HAPPEN!

Accidents will happen in the early weeks of training; this is a normal part of your dog learning to hold his bladder *and* learning where to go to the bathroom. Perfection is impossible when learning a new behavioral habit. Rely on patience, a sense of humor, a good cleaning product, and your commitment to support your pup as he establishes this new skill.

If you spot your dog beginning to eliminate indoors, gently scoop him up without reprimand and take him outdoors to finish. Reward him for finishing outdoors.

Please do not attempt to correct or punish accidents by rubbing your dog's nose in it, taking him to a soiled area for reprimand, or using physical punishment to correct. Punishment is ineffective for teaching house training and often backfires and results in a puppy who is afraid to go to the bathroom in your presence at all, significantly prolonging the house-training process.

In a few weeks you'll see significant progress and will be well on your way to a housetrained pup!