



## **Potty-Training**

The first day a puppy comes into his new home, there is a sense of urgency that pushes us to house-train him as quickly and thoroughly as possible. However, just like any other kind of training, house-training requires patience, persistence, and an understanding of your dog's instinctive habits.

### **Reasons for House-Training:**

A clean, hygienic living environment is imperative for you and your family, and pets must be made aware of your requirements. Once your dog understands the do's and don'ts of his bodily functions, you will have laid the groundwork for additional training, and you will be well on your way to a great relationship with your dog.

The need for house-training your dog is not only important; it is immediate. Have a plan for house-training before you bring your new dog home, and implement it right away. This is not only for reasons of hygiene, but also because your dog must understand that there are certain behaviors he is expected to learn, and that you are the one to look to for guidance.

### **Here's the Scoop:**

The first step in changing your dog's potty habits is to avoid the time-worn methods that have been proven to be wrong and counterproductive. Dogs live in the present—they think only about what they are doing and

what is going on around them at the moment—punishing them after the fact is ineffective and futile. Rubbing your dog’s nose in the accident, showing it to him and making a scene, or scolding him after the job has already been done, will only confuse him. Consider this scenario: Your dog has urinated on the rug without you seeing him. As you walk into the room, he runs toward you. At the same time, you notice the spot on the rug and reprimand him. The last thing your dog did was run toward you, so in his mind, you have just punished him for coming to you.

Ruh-roh!

You must catch your dog in the act for any corrections to be an effective deterrent to that behavior. Similarly, you must reward your dog *immediately* when he does something right (such as eliminating in his designated area), to clearly identify acceptable behavior.

### **Prevent Mistakes:**

Mistakes are a disaster since they set a bad precedent and create bad habits, which can be hard to break. Consequently, you must prevent mistakes at all cost. Your objective is to prevent the elimination behavior *before* it starts, and this requires a certain amount of vigilance on your part. You must stop him each time you catch him eliminating inside your home and reward him each time he goes in the right spot outdoors. Remember, consistency and patience are key to minimizing your dog’s confusion and helping him to understand exactly what the desired behavior is.

### **Potties for your Pooch:**

When you are not at home, leave your dog in a long-term confinement area, such as a single room indoors with easy-to-clean floors (bathroom, kitchen, or utility room)—this will be your puppy dog’s playroom. A dog exercise pen will also work as a long-term confinement area. Provide your dog with fresh water, a number of stuffed chew toys for entertainment, a comfortable bed in one corner, and a doggy toilet in the corner diagonally opposite from his bed. Your dog will naturally want to eliminate as far as possible from his bed, and so will soon develop the

good habit of using his toilet. And remember, good habits are just as hard to break as bad habits. For a doggy toilet, use a litter box filled with a piece of sod, or an artificial turf puppy potty. Thus, your dog will develop olfactory and substrate preferences for eliminating on grass.

The purpose of long-term confinement is to confine your dog's natural behaviors (including urinating and defecating) to an area that is protected (thus preventing any mistakes around the house when you are not there), and to help your dog quickly develop a strong preference for eliminating on grass.

### **Teach Your Dog to Eliminate in the Right Place:**

When you are at home, confine your dog to a short-term confinement area with a number of stuffed chew toys for entertainment. A portable dog crate makes an ideal doggy den. Alternatively, keep your dog on a leash tied around a heavy piece of furniture, or attach the leash to your belt. This way your dog may settle down beside you while you read, work at the computer, or watch television.

Every hour on the hour, say "Let's go potty" (or some other appropriate toilet instruction), and hurry your dog (on leash) to her potty area (in your yard, or at curbside outside the door of your house or apartment building). Stand still with your dog on leash and repeat the instruction to eliminate. Give your dog five minutes to empty herself. When your dog eliminates, praise her enthusiastically and offer a delicious treat. It is important to establish the correct behavior *in your presence*. That way, if you later catch her eliminating in the house and have to interrupt her, it will be clear that it is only the chosen area that is unacceptable, and not the act of eliminating in your presence.

Once your dog realizes that she can cash in her pee and poop for tasty treats, she will *want* to eliminate in her outside toilet area. Soiling the house just does not have comparable fringe benefits. Moreover, after a dozen or so repetitions, you will have taught your dog to eliminate on command.

If your dog does not eliminate during the allotted five-minute toilet break, put her back inside her crate for another hour. The purpose of short-term close confinement is to prevent any mistakes around the house when you are home (but cannot devote undivided attention to your dog) and to predict when your dog needs to eliminate. Temporarily (for no more than an hour at a time) confining a puppydog to a small space (e.g., a dog crate) inhibits elimination, since the dog does not want to soil her sleeping area. Consequently, your dog will want to go immediately upon release from confinement— especially since hurrying to the toilet area will jiggle her bladder and bowels. Since you choose when to release your dog, you may choose when your puppy eliminates, and since you can predict when your dog needs to eliminate, you may be there to show her where to go, to reward your dog for going, and to inspect and immediately clean up after your dog.

*Never confine a puppy or an unhousetrained adult dog to a crate for longer than an hour. A dog confined too long will be forced to soil her crate, making her extremely difficult to housetrain.*

When your puppy is old enough for a walk in the neighborhood, allow her to eliminate and reward her before you begin your walk. Many people walk their dogs just until they eliminate, and then take them straight home. This will often result in the dog waiting to eliminate for as long as they can in order to make the walk last longer. If you allow your dog to eliminate first, and then go for your walk, she will learn to eliminate more quickly so that the walk can begin!