



Housetraining Your Puppy

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Housetraining a puppy can be a nerve wracking experience if you don't have the right tools or information. It used to be that you would put a piddle pad or newspaper down in the corner of the room and teach the dog to go there. That is a very effective way of teaching the dog to urinate in one spot but the spot is indoors. You must teach the dog to use the same surface as what is in their backyard. Housetraining does not need to be difficult but you must be vigilant and consistent. Here are the steps you must take to train your puppy.

Errorless Housetraining

It helps to have certain tools to create a place for your puppy during the housetraining process. This method of housetraining is humane, safe and best of all efficient.

Things you will need

- An exercise pen for puppy. Place this on a non-absorbent surface such as in the kitchen. The exercise pen or "x-pen" needs to be large enough to accommodate the puppy, crate and litter box.
- A crate large enough for the puppy to stand up, turn around and lay down. If the crate is too big the puppy may use the crate for a bathroom.
- A cookie sheet or litter box filled with whatever surface is in the backyard. If your backyard is rocks, fill the pan with rocks. If you have grass, place sod in the pan. This will teach the dog to develop a preference for whichever surface you have outside. Do not use newspaper or piddle pads as the dog will only develop a preference for absorbent surfaces like carpet.
- Fun interactive toys to occupy the puppy. Fill small Kongs with food or peanut butter to keep the puppy busy. Do not give the puppy something that can choke it.
- A small water dish and food if the puppy is still being free fed.
- Treats or the puppy's dry dog food.

How to make it work

To make errorless housetraining work, you need to make sure the puppy is in its x-pen whenever you cannot watch it, such as when you are at work or asleep. Anytime the puppy is allowed to eliminate in the house, you must restart the housetraining process. The idea of errorless housetraining is the dog is never allowed to make a mistake in the house. If you are not actively interacting with the puppy and keeping it tethered to you, it must be a safe place with the litter box or outside.

Even though your dog will have their litter box in the x-pen does not mean you won't have to take it outside. You need to take your puppy out as much as possible. The younger it is, the more frequently it needs to go out. Whenever you take your puppy outside, it needs to be on leash. Put the leash on and take it to the place where you want it to eliminate. Tell your dog to "go potty" and give it a food treat when it eliminates. Make a really big deal out of it when it eliminates outside. Think of how excited you get when it pees inside, try putting all that energy into praising. Your dog will learn it will get more attention for doing what it is supposed to be doing. Only give them a few minutes to do their business. Do not allow it to be loose in the house if it did not eliminate outside. Take it back indoors and put it in its pen.

Put the x-pen in a safe area and then put in the dog's crate, litter box, toys and water dish. Teach the puppy to be comfortable in the x-pen by throwing in treats and having the dog walk in to get them. Feed the puppy in the x-pen and give them stuffed Kongs. See handout "Interactive Dog Toys." It will also help you with crate training to give your dog Kongs in the crate as well.

Establish a Routine

Dogs, not unlike people, are creatures of habit. To make housetraining simple, you must stick to a routine that works for you and your dog.

- Take your dog out first thing in the morning and several times throughout the day. They must go out after they eat, wake up, play or drink.
- Feed your dog at the same time every day.
- Do not make sudden changes to diet. This will interrupt the housetraining process.
- Remove the dog's water a couple of hours before going to bed.

Helpful Tips

Housetraining takes time, patience and consistency. Here are some tips that will make housetraining easier for you and your puppy.

- Feed your puppy high quality food designed for their growing bodies. Premium food will lessen the chance of digestive problems.
- Never allow your dog to be in the house without close supervision. Keep your dog tethered to you while they are in the house.
- If they begin to eliminate indoors, say "outside" and take them immediately outdoors to finish eliminating. Reward them for going outside.
- Thoroughly clean any accidents in the house. See handout "Removing Pet Stains and Odors."
- Never punish your puppy for eliminating in the house. If they were allowed to eliminate, you were not watching them carefully enough. It was your fault, not theirs. If you punish the puppy when you catch them, you will only make the puppy afraid of eliminating in front of you. You definitely don't want your puppy to begin peeing behind the couch or in another room.
- Do not walk your dog to get it to eliminate. Make your dog eliminate before starting the walk. If you take your dog home every time after it eliminates, that is like punishing it for eliminating outdoors. Reward your dog for eliminating by taking it for a walk or playing with it afterwards.
- Limit your dog's access to other rooms of the house where they could eliminate.
- If your dog is still experiencing housebreaking problems, look for other causes such as medical problems, separation anxiety, submissive urination or phobias.
- Consult a veterinarian or behaviorist for individual help with housetraining your puppy.

For more information on dog behavior, visit hssaz.org and click on Adopt A Pet then on Pet Behavior.