



Housebreaking Your Puppy

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Companion Dogs

Housebreaking a new puppy is the first attempt at training you and the puppy will make. This foundation for further training must be laid with careful thought and accurate information. Incorrect housebreaking techniques, especially those that include excessive, harsh and ineffective punishment will lead to behavioral problems in the older dog.

Are you certain that the pup is healthy? A new puppy will have to be dewormed by your veterinarian. An unhealthy puppy cannot be expected to be housebroken.

Select one toilet area for the pup. Not only is this aesthetically more pleasing, but also will speed up the housebreaking process.

Keep the pup's meals regularly scheduled. Regular feedings will encourage more predictable elimination patterns.

Monitor the pup's water intake when you are home. Offer water at regular intervals but do not allow the pup free access to water when you are home. Scheduling the pup's urination is easier if water is monitored.

Do not allow the pup in unsupervised areas of the house. Tie the dog by the leash and collar to the leg of the chair, TV or bed. You could also use a playpen or exercise pen (available at pet supply stores). The pup can still enjoy your companionship but cannot create havoc.

Keep a container of delicious food treats near the pup's toilet area. When the pup relieves herself, immediately reinforce the dog with a small good treat. Be sure that you reinforce in the same area where the pup relieved herself.

After feeding, play with the pup for five or ten minutes before you take the pup outside. This is an ideal time for training sessions. Your pup will more readily relieve herself after a bit of play.

Your pup will also need to be taken to her area after greeting new people, after a car ride, after play and after chewing on her toys. Give food reinforcers and verbal praise when the pup relieves herself.

Teach the pup to relieve herself on command. As you take the pup out and she searches for just the right spot, tell the pup "hurry up" or "go potty". Soon that phrase will elicit elimination from your dog.

Do not leave a young pup alone outside, in the kitchen or laundry room at night. Isolating the pup from the family will lead to behavioral problems. Pups that are well integrated into the family will become companions rather than nuisances.

Keep the pup in the bedroom with you at night. Put the pup in a crate or exercise pen. You may tie the dog the leg of the bed with her leash and collar, allowing the dog to comfortably stand up, turn around and lie down. Your pup will have the advantage of learning to stay clean and dry at night as well as form lasting bond with you through this quiet companionship.

NEVER push the dog's nose in its stool, hit, slap, spank or jerk on a choke chain to punish a housebreaking accident. These methods are not only ineffective but will encourage aggression and other behavioral problems in the dog.

NEVER punish the pup unless you see the pup relieve herself in the wrong area. Punishment even two seconds after the behavior is ineffective. Punishment after the behavior will encourage biting, running away from you, hiding the stool in the house, eating the stool, or submissive urination and will destroy the bonds you need to build during this impressionable time.

Use sound and motion to punish the pup when she relieves herself in the wrong area. Toss a beanbag or empty aluminum can with pennies inside it near the pup. Clap your hands, slap the wall or shout. As the pup starts to squat, startle and distract her. Take the pup to her toilet area and reinforce her for eliminating in the correct area.

Do not allow the pup to watch you clean up accidents. Put the pup away or outside while you clean up. Use an odor neutralizer (Nature's Miracle, Outright, Simple Solutions) when cleaning up accidents.

Puppy Problems

Puppies present common concerns in early puppyhood (under five months). This is the personality-forming period in your dog's life. Careless and/or harsh handling will result in serious behavior problems in adulthood.

Most puppies will bite at anything that moves, including your hand as you pet the pup. Give the pup a knotted towel to bite on as you pet her to redirect the bite response. Avoid touching the face and head, as this will stimulate the bite response. Have the children carry this "pup towel" with them as they are playing with the pup.

Take your young pup to new environments where she will be introduced to new people. This "socialization" helps create a friendly, non-biting adult dog. Carry food treats for the puppy when she meets the neighbors and have her show off with a "sit" behavior. If she can't do one, see if the neighbors can.

Teach your pup how to behave at the veterinarian's office. Open the pup's mouth, handle the feet and ears, lift her on a table and examine her entire body once a week. Give food treats when she blissfully complies with this, *and* be sure to bring some along to her first few veterinarian visits. If your veterinarian also blissfully complies with all of these, reward appropriately.

TRAIN YOUR PUPPY'S PERSONALITY, NOT JUST HER BODY! Dogs of all breeds have the potential to bite and must be taught to control that potential.

Enroll your puppy in a Kindergarten Puppy Training class when the pup is seven weeks old. Training must begin before the puppy is 16 weeks old. This class is especially designed for puppies and the critical stages of emotional and social development. Socialization games with dogs and people, gentle obedience training without a choke chain and solving the problems of housebreaking, playful nipping and exploratory chewing are part of KPT. Positive learning experiences during these critical periods (6 to 18 weeks) will ensure that you and your dog enjoy lasting bonds of understanding and compassion through the Kindergarten Puppy Training.