

Housetraining

“Don’t forget to flush!” If only housetraining your puppy was that simple. But, housetraining a dog is a process. Done successfully, it sets the stage for a happier relationship between you and your furry friend.

Begin with getting your puppy’s system on a schedule. Offer meals in his bowl. After 15 minutes take the bowl up. If there is still food in the bowl, don’t worry, your puppy will probably be hungry for the next meal. Having a dog that grazes throughout the day, makes it difficult to predict when your dog may need to relieve himself.

Water, however, should be available at all times. To help a young puppy make it through the night, take the water dish up one hour before the final potty break.

Second, teach your puppy what you want. Dogs determine where their acceptable bathroom area is based on what they feel beneath their paws. Grass is ok; carpet is not. A potty pad is ok; tile is not.

Have your puppy on a leash. Take him to the area you have selected as the “doggie restroom”. Give your puppy a gentle cue like “Go potty”.

This is not a time for play, so avoid making eye contact, which dogs can take as an invitation to engage with you.

If your puppy is not on a leash when you take him outside, he may run around, get excited and forget to potty. Then when he gets back inside, he relaxes and realizes he has a very full bladder, and has an accident on your floor.

Immediately after your puppy eliminates in the correct spot, praise him! If you want to reinforce with a treat, give your dog the food right there, not when you get inside. Let him off the leash for a few minutes as an additional reward.

If your puppy does not eliminate, take him back inside and either into a crate or restricted area where you can watch him closely. Try again in 10 minutes. Puppies need to be taken out once an hour when awake and active, and usually more often in the morning, after eating, after sleeping and after playing.

If your dog has an accident, do not punish. Your puppy will not understand, and might attribute your punishment to what he is doing at the time--even if it is something you want to encourage.

If you catch your puppy in the act startle with a clap and hurry him outdoors, saying in a pleasant tone, "Outside, outside". If your puppy finishes up outside, praise in a big way. This is a golden opportunity to clarify what you want and what you don't want.

If you notice your dog eliminating on the floor, don't scold him, hit him or rub his nose in it. The only thing your dog will learn is not to "go" when you're around. (Dogs treated badly go behind the sofa, or wait until you've left the room to relieve themselves.)

If you find a puddle, just clean it up nonchalantly. To some dogs, your clean-up activity might look like play, so don't let them watch you.

Use a product like Nature's Miracle, Petastic or Simple Solution (liquids you pour on the spot) to break down the urine molecules so your dog doesn't pick up the scent of "Bathroom Spot". Many stain and odor removers do fine for our noses, but not for a dog's.

The initial goal is to have at least two weeks that are accident-free. That means you must supervise your puppy at all times, so you can get him to his bathroom spot when he is most likely to eliminate. If you can't keep an eye on him, put him in a crate, baby-gated area or small room that is easy to clean up.

Watch your dog's behavior and you'll soon recognize signs that your dog may be ready for a potty break.

The length of time it takes to housetrain depends on the dog. Generally, large breeds are quicker to housetrain than small breeds. Males are easier than females.

Many puppies pick up the concept at three to six months of age. In general, though, a dog will be six months to three years old before it can hold it for eight active hours.

Through this learning process, be patient with your dog and yourself. Be clear, consistent and positive and you will soon be celebrating a housetrained pooch!