

HOUSETRAINING FOR YOUR NEW DOG OR PUPPY

by Jane Marshall and Mary Dow Dog Trainers

Dogs are naturally clean animals. At a very early age they learn to leave their nest area to eliminate. Giving them lots of opportunities to go outside and be rewarded while they take care of toileting will ensure these clean habits continue.

When you first start housetraining your puppy or dog it is essential to have a small area in which he or she will be confined. Crates are ideal for this and should be of a size such that the puppy can stand up and lie down in it.

The puppy should sleep in the crate overnight. Set your alarm to wake early. Pick the puppy out of the crate, attach the leash and to a designated outdoor bathroom spot. Stand and ignore the puppy until he eliminates. After a long night in the crate this will probably be immediately. Praise the puppy lavishly and give a small food treat. Allow the puppy to wander on the leash in this designated area until you feel he has taken care of all his toileting needs. Return to the house and allow the puppy to have some freedom under your watchful eye while you prepare breakfast and start your day. The puppy should be in a baby gated area of the kitchen where he can play with his toys and have some room to move about. He needs to be close to you so that you can give him constant guidance. This is very similar to having an 18 month old child to whom we would constantly be giving feedback in order for him to learn.. This same level of supervision is necessary for the young puppy (or new adult dog). They should never be out of your sight at this stage. You will be giving your puppy feedback not only on toileting habits but on what he may and may not chew as well. If you need to leave the puppy while you shower or cannot watch him for any reason he should spend that time in his crate.

When you have finished your breakfast it is time to feed the puppy. Remove the bowl with any uneaten food and take the puppy to his toilet area again. Be patient while he performs, praise him and then you may go off on your morning walk or have a fun exercise session in the yard. Before going back into the house visit the toilet spot again. Now the puppy is ready for some down time and can be confined to his crate with a chew toy while you continue with your own life.

This routine is repeated continually throughout the day. With this tight schedule there should be very few accidents in the house but you should expect mistakes. The odd accident is all part of raising a puppy or helping a new dog to adjust. What do we do if the puppy soils in the house? Keep your sense of humor! We are greatly in favor of the rolled up newspaper technique! We give ourselves a good hard whack on our own wrist and admit that WE made a mistake. We either did not give the puppy the needed chance to go outside or we did not supervise him well enough in the home.

NEVER punish the puppy for eliminating in the house either during or after the event. It simply teaches him to be afraid of you and he will sneak off next time into another room or behind a chair. Clean up accidents with a special organic product from the pet store. Remember that puppies like to return to a spot they have already soiled. Consider covering such areas with an item of furniture. A bizarre room design for a couple of weeks may be better than a damaged carpet. You may even impress your visitors with your Feng Shui !

With this routine the puppy will gradually learn that the inside of the house is his den/living area which he will want to keep clean. At first it is a very time consuming schedule but it will have big pay backs later.

Note Puppies and dogs cannot be left in crates for more than 4 hours at a time during the day. (5 on the odd occasion). An 8 week old puppy can only be left for 2-3 hours during the day between toileting and activity breaks.

If your dog, who is usually housetrained, develops unusual behavior such as wetting in the house you first need to consider the possibility of a health problem and have him checked by the vet.

FREQUENTLY ASKED HOUSE TRAINING QUESTIONS ON OUR HELPLINE

I am at work all day. How can I use this schedule?

Our best suggestion would be to hire a pet sitter to walk your new puppy/dog at mid day.

If this is not an option you will need to create a secure area, usually in a kitchen or bathroom. Cover part of the floor with newspaper and position the crate, with the door removed, at the other side of the area. The puppy will then be able to eliminate away from his living area.

My puppy pees/poops in the crate. What should I do?

This could be happening for a number of reasons.

1. Are you leaving him too long between toileting/activity breaks?
2. Is the puppy soiling because of anxiety at being left alone? If the puppy/dog is frantic when put in the crate, soils the crate, (drools or chews constantly at the wire) he may be panicked at being isolated. This anxiety needs to be addressed immediately. Please call your vet or the APS Helpline.
3. Occasionally a puppy or dog who has been raised in a bad situation (i.e. puppy mill, long term stay in shelter or tethered) and has been forced to use his living area for toileting, will lose his clean habits. In this instance he cannot be confined to a crate. Instead use a baby gated area with the crate open it. Usually the puppy/dog, given this choice, will

regain his clean habits. Feeding the dog in the crate will speed the process as dogs/puppies will not eliminate where they eat.

4. Check that the crate is not too big. If the puppy can snuggle in one end and walk to the other to eliminate you need to reduce the size of the crate with a spacer or use a smaller crate.

My puppy does not tell me when she needs to go out.

This comes much later but if you stick with the housetraining routine she should be able to wait for her toilet breaks. You will also learn to read her body language. Puppies usually sniff and walk in purposeful circles before urinating. Look out for this and take her out quickly. As she gets older and comfortable with the process you can ask her “Need to go out?” Eventually you will find her waiting by the door or “asking” to be taken out.

My dog pees on the floor when I come home and when I try to pet her

This is common in young dogs or those who are timid or excited by our return. Puppies tend to grow out of it but you can help any dog by not making a big deal of your greetings. Give her a quick “Hi” without making eye contact when you get home, put her on the leash and take her out to eliminate. Then you can pet her and have your fun time. Spread out the excitement of the reunion and she will learn control. In their natural environment dogs urinate in front of their leader to show respect. When we take on the role of leader they honor us in the same manner! NEVER use punishment for this behavior, it makes the problem significantly worse. As your dog becomes more confident she will get more control over her bladder and this problem should disappear.

Can I housetrain an older dog?

These routines are successfully used for housetraining new puppies, adult rescue dogs and dogs who have already learned to soil their environments. If you are nice enough to be giving a home to an older dog your patience will be rewarded as you gain a new friend!

Please Note: If your dog, who is usually housetrained, develops unusual behaviour such as wetting in the house you first need to consider the possibility of a health problem and have him checked by the vet. Urinary infections are common and usually respond quickly to medication. A dog that has good training does not usually revert to eliminating in the house without good reason. Also look for changes in your lifestyle such as a move, new baby, new pet or other situations which may cause anxiety when trying to solve the problem.