Housetraining Methods

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Housebreaking your new puppy doesn't have to be hard or messy, nor should it take very long if done right. Getting your dog to do his business outside is a matter of training, and the more attention you can give to your puppy during this crucial training, the shorter this awkward stage will last.

Housebreaking Rule #1:
If you don't catch your puppy making an "accident," then don't punish him for it.

Housebreaking Rule #2:
When he does it right, praise him!

Forget the old myths about housebreaking

True or **False:** If your new puppy makes a mess in the house while you're not around, bring the dog over to the mess, hold his nose in it, and scold him. This will force him to learn that going in the house isn't acceptable under any circumstances.

The answer? **FALSE.** Unfortunately, this is one of the most prevalent housebreaking myths among new pet owners. The fact is, puppies that age can't fathom the cause/effect relationship between their natural bodily functions and why, 20 minutes later or more, you're yelling at them. This housebreaking method doesn't work, and really does more emotional harm than good.

Methods of housebreaking

1. **Starting Inside:** There are several ways to housebreak a

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puppy. With the first, you can put down papers or pretreated pads, encouraging them to use these areas for going to the bathroom. The pads are scented with an attractant that encourages the puppy to use them. Whenever you see them starting into their "pre-potty pattern," such as walking around and sniffing the floor, you gently pick them up without talking and carry them over to the papers/pad and then praise them when they go to the bathroom.

When all goes well and they are using the papers consistently, the papers are either moved closer to the door and/or another set is placed outside. The transition is made from concentrating the toilet habits to one spot inside the home to one spot outside the home. Finally, the papers inside are eliminated. The only problem with this method is that for a period of time it encourages the animal to eliminate inside the home. In our experience, housebreaking may take longer when this method is used.

2. **Crate Training:** The second popular method of housebreaking involves the use of a crate or cage. Make sure the crate isn't too large - just big enough to fit their sleeping blanket or mat. Dogs do not like to soil their beds because they would be forced to lay in the mess. Crate training encourages puppies to learn to control their bladder and bowels. During the daytime, puppies 4 months of age or less only have control for a few hours, although during the nighttime it can be longer.

   During housebreaking, whenever the puppy is inside the home but cannot be watched, he is placed in the crate. This might be while you are cooking, reading to the children, or even away from the home. The last thing you do before you put the puppy in the crate is take him outside to his favorite spot. The first thing you do when you take the animal out of the crate is another trip outside. No food or water goes in the crate, just a blanket and maybe a chew toy to occupy his time. Overnight is definitely crate time. As your faith in the puppy grows, leave him out for longer and longer periods of time.

   Most people do not recognize an important advantage of crate training. It does more than just discourage the animal from messing in the house. It also teaches the puppy something very important. The puppy learns that when the urge to urinate or defecate occurs, he can hold it. Just because the pup feels like he needs to relieve himself, the pup learns that he does not have to. This is thought to be the main reason why puppies that have gone through crate training have fewer mistakes later on.

3. **Constant Supervision:** The last method involves no papers, pads, or crates. Rather, you choose to spend all the time necessary with the puppy. This works

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very well for people who live and work in their homes, retired persons, or in situations where the owners are always with the animal. Whenever they see the puppy doing his "pre-potty pattern" they hustle him outside. It is important that the dog is watched at all times and that no mistakes are to occur. When he is taken outside, use a leash or lead to keep him less distracted and watch the puppy closely - as soon as all goes as planned, he should be praised enthusiastically. Do not play until after the pup goes so he learns to go quickly on command.

Use simple and consistent verbal cues

Specific verbal communications will also help the two of you understand what is desired. It is an excellent idea to always use a word when it is time to head to the bathroom. We like "Outside?" Remember that whenever you use a verbal command or signal, it is important that everybody in the family always uses the same word in the same way.

Once outside, we try to encourage the pup to get on with the act in question. Some suggestions of phrases you could use are: "Do It," "Potty," or "Hurry Up." As soon as your pup eliminates, it is very important to praise them with a "Good Dog" and then come back inside immediately. Again, make this trip that started outside with a specific word "Outside" be for a purpose. If we are taking the pup out to play with a ball or go for a walk we will not use this word even if we know they will eliminate while we are outside.

If Accidents Happen

One of the key issues in housebreaking is to follow Rule Number One: **If you do not catch your puppy doing it, then do not punish him for it!** If you find a mess that was left when you were not there, **clean it up and forget it.**

Discipline will not help because unless you catch the puppy in the act, he will have no idea what the scolding is for. At this point in his life a puppy's memory is very, very short. Your puppy has urinated and defecated hundreds of times before he met you. Nobody made a fuss before and the pup will not relate the punishment, regardless of its form, together with something he has done without incident numerous times before. Especially if he did it more than 30 seconds ago! Puppies are just like our children. Unless something was really fun (and a repetitious act like going to the bathroom is not), they are not thinking about what they did in the past. They are thinking about what they can do in the future.

The same should be said as to your first reaction when you actually catch them in the act of urinating or defecating. Do not get mad. Quickly, but calmly, pick them up and without raising your voice sternly say "No." Carry them outside or to their papers. They are going to be excited, but stay there with them a while and if they finish the

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job, reward them with simple praise like "Good Dog."

Remember, though the housebreaking process may get frustrating at times - especially cleaning up the occasional accident - be patient and stay calm. If you want housebreaking to go quickly, regardless of the method you use, follow these simple tips and try to spend as much time as possible with your puppy.

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