



TIPS ON HOUSETRAINING YOUR DOG

Housetraining involves preventing mistakes and rewarding your dog when she urinates in an inappropriate location.

PREVENTING MISTAKES

Preventing mistakes can be the hardest part of housetraining. You should make sure that your dog is adequately supervised whenever they are inside. If you are not able to supervise her, then she should be confined. A kennel is an excellent way of confining a dog that has not yet learned to eliminate outside. The kennel will be discussed more below.

REWARDING APPROPRIATE LOCATIONS

A schedule can help to make sure that you are taking your dog out with sufficient frequency. There will be some variability, but a good gauge is that you should not expect a puppy to hold their bladder longer than the number of months old plus one hour (so a 3-month-old puppy can only hold her bladder for 4 hours). Smaller breeds may have less time before needing to go out and larger breeds may be able to hold their bladder longer. During walking hours, you will be letting your dog out significantly more frequently as puppies need to eliminate after eating, drinking, waking up, playing, or a change in environment.

In order to appropriately reward your dog for eliminating in the correct location, you first need to choose a location. Take your dog to the same place every time you take them out to eliminate as there will be an olfactory (smell) cue. Try not to wait more than 5 minutes each time you bring the dog out. If the dog doesn't go to the bathroom in that amount of time, bring them back in (closely supervised or confined) and try again in 20 minutes.

During housetraining, you should go outside with your dog so that you can stand near them when they eliminate. As soon as she has finished eliminating, you can verbally praise her and give her a small (fingernail sized) treat. If you stand in the doorway while your dog eliminates, you may inadvertently train her to come to you after eliminating rather than training her to eliminate outside. It may be helpful to have her on a leash until her housetraining is complete.

Try not to play with your dog or give her a walk until after she has eliminated. This is especially important if you are trying to teach her to signal when she would like to go outside. If a play session or walk is withheld, your dog will learn that eliminating must occur before other fun activities.

If your dog enjoys being outside, try not to take her inside immediately after eliminating. If you take her inside immediately, she will not learn to go to the bathroom when she goes out, but to hold her bladder as urinating means she will have to go inside.



A dog that previously was house trained that has been moved to a new location may need to be reminded of her former training. When getting a dog that is already house trained, act as though she is not house trained for the first few days. Take the dog out significantly more frequently than you feel would normally be necessary, confine her when you are unable to watch her in the house, and reward her for eliminating in the correct location. If the dog has not changed location (due to a move or re-homing) and is no longer house trained, then consider a medical problem and seek the advice of your veterinarian.

Some dogs that have been punished for eliminating in the house may avoid eliminating in front of you when you take them outside. Be patient and continue to give her a short, 5 minute window whenever you know she has to eliminate. Keep a very close watch on her in the house as she may try to move to another room to eliminate to avoid you.

PAPER TRAINING

Many dogs that are trained on this type of surface will have a very difficult time transitioning from this surface to surfaces outdoors such as grass, mulch, dirt, etc. The most convenient time for paper/diaper pad use is when puppies are too young to hold their bladder when you are absent for extended periods of time (as with an 8-week-old puppy that you have to leave for work for 8 hours). An exercise pen (or ex-pen) with a separate area for sleeping/playing and eliminating is recommended. This way, if the puppy has to eliminate, they can use a substrate that is easy to clean until they are old enough to be crated during the time you are away. You can also get neighbors or dog walkers to take your puppy out whenever you are unavailable so that you can avoid needing to use paper or diaper pads.

CRATING

Until you have acclimated your dog to a crate, it may be beneficial to use an exercise pen or confinement in a smaller room (such as a bathroom) while you are unable to watch her. You can acclimate your dog to the crate by saying the word you intend to use (such as “crate” or “bed”) and then throwing a treat into the back of the crate. Most puppies don’t have pre-conceived fear of the crate, so this should be adequate.

For dogs that seem to be afraid, you may start with a larger crate, or a crate made of different material (plastic versus metal), or you can try covering or uncovering the crate. Find what works for your dog.

Once your dog is comfortable going into the crate, you can start closing the door with your dog inside for brief periods of time while she is busy with a treat, toy, or food puzzle. Gradually increase the amount of time that your dog spends in the crate until she is able to spend time comfortably while you are unable to watch her closely.