



# House Training

House training is one of the simplest yet hardest issues to overcome when raising a new puppy. It takes an investment of time in the beginning, but the rewards last the lifetime of your dog.

To start house training your puppy, you'll need:

- **Crate.** Large enough for him to get up and turn around, but not so large that he could eliminate in a corner and be just fine napping in another corner.
- **Leash.** To take him out to go potty.
- **Treats.** For potty, you'll want a very high value treat such as roasted chicken, hot dogs or cheese.

Dogs love schedules and routines and these are essential in house training your puppy. Do not free feed your puppy. While it may be convenient to just fill up his bowl whenever it's empty, it does not make his elimination schedule predictable and thus, you cannot reward him for proper potty habits consistently. Decide on the times you want to feed your puppy. For example: a) 7a, 1p and 7p for puppies or b) 7a and 7p for adolescent and adult dogs.

He'll definitely need to go potty shortly after he wakes up, drinks, eats or plays hard. Plus, in the beginning more frequent intervals to be able to keep ahead of his elimination ability.

The typical protocol is if he goes potty in the spot when you tell him, he's earned a treat and supervised freedom. If he doesn't, then he is confined in a crate for a short duration

and taken outside for another opportunity to go.

Here is a basic plan to start with:

- When you wake up in the morning, put the leash on your puppy (have treats on you) and run to the potty spot. The running jiggles his bladder and increases the likelihood he'll go potty. When you get to the spot that you've designated as the potty spot say, *Fido, Go Potty*. This is one of the first cues he'll learn.
- Remain in that spot for up to 2 minutes. If he goes potty, reward him right after he's finished (not during) with a *Good Boy* and treat. Then go back in the house. If he doesn't go potty, he goes in his crate for 10 minutes and repeat the process until he goes.
- Even if you have a yard and you think you don't care where he chooses to eliminate, have him on leash with you. You will know exactly when he goes potty and can reward him to let him know that's exactly what you want. And think about it, do you really want him to go anywhere in the yard? Wouldn't it be more effective to teach him to go in one particular spot rather than having land mines throughout the yard?
- After his first potty, it is time to feed him. I recommend hand feeding for the first couple of weeks. He'll learn that the food comes directly from you and won't be protective of the food bowl. If he doesn't eat all of it within 10 minutes, remove the food. He'll learn that he needs to eat right away or he has to wait until the next meal time.

- A few minutes after he's finished eating, he's ready for another potty break. With your puppy back on leash, run to the designated potty spot, give the cue, *Fido, Go Potty* and wait for up to 2 minutes. Dogs have a higher metabolism than us and can process food more quickly. He should poop at this point, so be sure to wait the 2 minutes for him to poop.
- If he goes potty, he's earned up to an hour of supervised freedom. Then you'll take him back out to go potty. If he doesn't go potty, he goes back in the crate for 10 minutes and the potty process is repeated.
- The supervised freedom means that he cannot be alone in a room. You wouldn't leave a toddler in room alone. Just like a toddler, your puppy can get into things he shouldn't and accidents can happen (that you may not find for days).
- If you cannot supervise your puppy then put him in his crate or small confined area (such as the kitchen or laundry room) until you can. If you want to watch a movie at night and not be interrupted with constant potty breaks, he can be in his crate. This will help him build up the strength in his bladder to hold it longer than the 60 minutes. If he's asleep in his crate when it's potty time, let him sleep; just keep an eye on him to see when he wakes up. He'll need to go out quickly.
- A general rule of thumb for the maximum amount of hours he can be in the crate is: take the number of months old he is and add 1. So for example, you have an 8 week old puppy, you can expect him to be able to hold it in his crate for 3 hours. Once you start your house training schedule, he'll be able to hold it longer and longer.
- Keep the 60 minutes of freedom for 2 days. Then increase the time by 15 minutes every 2 days. If he has an accident, back up the time to the previous successful schedule for an additional day or two. He may have been asked to hold it longer than he's capable of at that moment in the process.
- During the night, there's a high probability he'll need to go out. If he whimpers to go out, take him out, but note the time. The next night set your alarm 30 minutes prior to that time. You don't want him to learn that whining will always get him out of the crate.

Puppies develop differently. So, don't be discouraged if a friend's puppy can hold it longer than yours. The real test will be when your puppy reaches adolescence (around 5-6 months). Many puppies that were fantastic in the early stages will hit the teenage months and all of the sudden act like they have no recollection of a potty spot.

Prevention creates good habits. If he does make a mistake, roll up a newspaper, hit your head with it and say, *Bad human!* You just pushed him too fast and you'll need to pay closer attention to the house training schedule. Punishing him for soiling in the house teaches your dog to eliminate in a more secretive spot and not in front of you.

It sounds like a lot of work to house train a puppy. And it is! But the rewards are endless. A month of investment in proper potty training will yields years of relief.

If you need additional help with house training or other behavior/training topics, please give us a call.