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House Training Puppies

Don't panic!

Housetraining is something which must be worked through with every new puppy. Some pick the idea up very quickly; others seem to take a while to catch on. If your pup is one of the slower ones, take heart – they all get there in the end!



Understanding how your puppy's mind works can help to take some of the hassle out of housetraining for both of you. Remember, what being clean means to you and what it means to your pup are not necessarily the same thing! To you, it is important that the puppy will go to a chosen spot in the garden to do his business. To your pup, it is important to relieve himself where and when the notion takes him! The puppy's only major criteria are that he would prefer to perform in a quiet place away from his food and his bed, which is a health and safety rule of nature. From the puppy's point of view, this makes behind the sofa or on your bedroom floor perfectly acceptable places. It is up to you to show him that this is not what you had in mind, and to guide him to a better spot.

Where do I start?

So, let's get everybody on the same wavelength and make housetraining as easy as possible for both of you. Right from the start, choose an area in the garden which you would like the puppy to use as his toilet area.

Remember that a puppy's early warning system is not very good in the early weeks, so to make life as easy as possible for both of you, choose an area which is quick and easy to reach from the puppy's bed, food and play areas.

Anticipate when the puppy will need to be taken out. As a general rule, puppies need to go to the loo at the following times:

- immediately after waking.
- after eating or drinking.
- when excited.
- after playing and sometimes during a wild game if he did not have a chance to go out before the game started.
- At least once every waking hour!

These are your guidelines – get the pup to his appointed toilet area at these times and you are well on your way to cracking the problem

Watch for the signs...

Learn to read your puppy's body language and you will soon spot tell tale signs that he is about to urinate or defaecate. Typical signs to look for are sniffing around in a purposeful manner, circling round on one spot or holding the tail high. As soon as you spot these signs, pick the pup up and take him straight to his toilet area.

Show him what you expect of him...

Don't expect your puppy to know where he has to go without being shown. Take him to his toilet place, stay with him, but don't play with him. Your puppy needs to learn that until he performs there is no fun. As soon as he goes then you can make a big fuss of him and have a game! This should encourage your puppy to go to the toilet as soon as you get to the toilet area with no messing about, as he knows the fun only starts after he has been to the toilet. If you would like your puppy to toilet on command choose a word for this action and start using it now.

Don't let it turn into a game...



Housetraining time is *not* wild-game-in-the-garden time. If the puppy does not perform straightaway when taken to his toilet area, don't keep him out for ages. Instead, take him back inside but watch him especially carefully. Don't let him wander off behind a chair or into another room. If you have an indoor crate, pop the pup inside for a few minutes. Take him out again 10 minutes later. This vigilance will quickly bring rewards, so persevere.

Accidents do happen ☹

A very young puppy cannot last all night without needing the toilet. This doesn't mean that you should be losing sleep to let them out. If you go downstairs to let out the puppy every time he cries you are asking for trouble. Giving them attention for crying at night just rewards the behaviour and encourages them to do it more and more. Restrict the puppy to an enclosed area at night time, an indoor crate is ideal. Make sure there is enough space for a bed and an area with an easily cleaned surface so the pup can avoid soiling his own bed if he cannot wait – a prospect neither of you will relish.

NEVER punish a puppy for having an accident – he cannot wait and it is unfair to expect him to hold on until you are ready to take him out. Punishment will only confuse him and may in fact teach him to be more secretive about toileting. You don't want him to be afraid of going to the loo where you can see him, but rather to perform quickly in your presence when you take him out!

Don't leave a bad smell...

Mistakes *will* happen; it's all part of bringing up a puppy. Try not to get frustrated with the pup or yourself and clean up any accidents which happen as quickly as possible, with the minimum of fuss. Treat the area with a pet deodoriser (we sell safe deodorising sprays or you can make your own by diluting a small amount of biological washing powder in water and using this – check that the spray won't bleach your carpets first, though!) Such a spray will completely eliminate doggy odours detectable by his sensitive nose as well as yours. To our noses an area may smell perfectly fresh when cleaned with a normal cleaner, but to the dog's nose there will be a residual scent which may attract him back to use the same area again.

While you are cleaning up, think about why the accident happened?

- When was the puppy last outside?
- When did he last eat?
- Have you changed his diet?
- Has there been a change in the household routine?
- Do accidents happen when he gets excited?
- Have you relaxed your housetraining a little too early?
- Have you cleaned any accident areas with a deodoriser?
- Does he understand what is expected of him?

Tried all that and still getting nowhere?

If the puppy is having a lot of accidents, this would suggest that he does not really understand what is expected. So take the time to go right back to the beginning and show him again what you want. It is also quite common for a puppy to appear to have become housetrained and then to relapse for a while. Do not despair; consider the possibilities and you will probably be able to pinpoint what has gone wrong. Then again, take a few steps back and retrain. The whole process can be frustrating and needs lots of time and patience, but with a bit of consistency and dedication you will triumph!

Very rarely, medical problems can cause a form of incontinence in which the dog really can not feel that it needs the loo and so has no stimulus to ask to go out. If your puppy is continually having accidents, particularly whilst resting, and normal housetraining methods are simply not working, give us a call on 01442 833198 and we can make sure there are no medical problems.

Finally, some dogs, however well trained still have little accidents when they are greeting visitors or family members. The problem is more common in bitches and every time the dog becomes excited, a little puddle appears. This is a natural response called *submissive urination* and is quite separate from normal house training. The puppy is actually trying to show you how much they respect you and how lowly they think they are. To help your dog break this habit, do not shout at them; instead keep greetings very low key and ideally outside. Build up the puppy's confidence gradually and greet her gently. If she has an accident, clean it up and don't make a fuss.



Good luck! Hopefully you will have a well house trained puppy, but don't forget we are on hand to help you every step of the way.