



HOUSETRAINING YOUR PUPPY & DOG

Believe it or not, teaching housetraining to a puppy or even an older dog is easier than you think. Simply follow this proven method precisely, and you can expect good results given enough time ... and patience ... and consistency.

Keep two points in mind: First, dogs begin to learn readily around 7 to 9 weeks of age - but they have to realize that you are going to teach them. Second, all dogs are naturally hygienic. Early in life, they seek a spot to eliminate that is away from where they eat and sleep. Unfortunately, many pet owners unknowingly force dogs to violate this hygiene by placing doors or other barriers between their puppies and a proper toilet area.

TO CRATE TRAIN or NOT TO CRATE TRAIN: For most dogs, having a crate inside the house can be a huge help. What I really like about a crate is that for many dogs, it becomes *their* home within *your* home ... a cozy refuge where they can go to sleep, get away from commotion, and feel safe. For puppies that love to chew, keeping them in a suitably-sized crate can also prevent access to household items, and avoid the unwanted behavior of destructive chewing (check out my information on Chewing Behavior to help survive this situation).

REWARDS: During this program, we recommend using 2 types of rewards: **Verbal Praise** and **Petting**. We understand the temptation of using doggy treats, but we want the puppy to learn for you ... not for food. To make you the 'teacher', we'll use your pet's need for praise and petting since this is natural to them.

One thing to think about for a moment is how many times a day does your dog 'ask' to be petted? It's probably more than you realize. And I imagine that you respond to your dog's requests by petting him/her, which is only natural. So let's use these magic moments to teach your dog that you are a teacher as well as a 'petter'. Here's how ...

Each time your puppy or dog asks to be petted, you should respond by holding your hand out (your palm facing down) about 1 foot above its nose and say "(Your dog's name), Sit!" Move your hand back over its ears as you speak. This usually makes the dog look up, which is the first part of teaching to sit. Keep repeating "Good Sit" until the dog sits. Then pet it on the neck / throat area and the chest with your other hand for a few seconds as you repeat the praise.

If not successful the first time, that's OK. Simply repeat the process until success is achieved. When your dog sits for about 5 to 10 seconds, release it from the command by saying "OK", then pet and praise again. Gradually increase the time during the "sit" until you have reached 1 to 2 minutes before you say "OK".

Be sure every adult (and older children, too) that lives with the pet follows this procedure. The more consistent you are, the better your dog will be reinforced, making a better adjusted and happier pet.

DIET AND FEEDING: Feed your puppy at least twice a day ... but do NOT leave food available throughout the day. Feed them either 2 or 3 separate meals. With the right schedule, your dog should have a bowel movement a short time after eating. This works out perfectly because someone must be there to feed the puppy anyway, so taking him/her to its outdoor toilet area should not be inconvenient.

Remember: Dogs do not want to eliminate where they eat. If your dog is urinating or defecating in a certain area in the house, try feeding it directly on that spot (after cleaning up any mess, of course). Leave the food dish at that spot between meals for a few days as a reminder against soiling that area again. Some older dogs (~8 months or older) that urinate in the house may require this technique for several weeks to break the habit.

TEACHING WHERE TO GO: Designate a particular part of the yard as a "potty zone" for your dog. Your puppy should be taken or led to that particular area each time it goes outside to use the bathroom. Shortly after your dog finishes its meal, take it out to the toilet area. You should stand still while your dog sniffs around for its preferred spot. For dogs, the act of sniffing is vital as they scout out the right spot. Do not interfere by urging your pet to perform. However, I would not spend more than 5 to 8 minutes waiting for your puppy to pee or poop. If it does nothing, I would return to the house and put him/her in a crate for 5-10 minutes ... then take him back outside and try again, for no more than 5 to 8 minutes ... then continue this process until he/she poops and pees.

Once the 'duty' has been completed, crouch down and point at the urine or feces and say "Good dog". Look directly at the poop or pee, not at your dog. If your dog sniffs it, then you need to praise and pet him/her enthusiastically before going back inside. This will help reinforce the desired behavior.

This plan should be used after each meal for adult dogs, plus the following situations for puppies:

- After waking up, even from a nap
- After drinking water
- After extreme excitement
- After prolonged chewing on a toy, etc
- If it starts to sniff as if it's looking for a place to eliminate

In a few days, the puppy should automatically head for its proper place after meals or whenever the urge strikes. If it takes longer, be patient. Once your dog goes consistently to the area, they typically know here to go on their own.

A COOL TIP WORTH TRYING: One very helpful technique for teaching your pet to go outside is use the same door all the time when going outside. On the inside of this door, tie a small bell to the end of a long string that is tied to the doorknob. Be sure that the bell hangs low enough that your puppy can reach it on its own with its paws. Each time you take the puppy outside, lean over and lift either one of the puppy's front paws and ring the bell with the paw. Then immediately take the puppy outside. Do this every time you take it outside and it will soon learn that ringing the bell means "go outside". Once your pup learns this habit, simply listen for the sound of the bell to alert you when he/she needs to go potty. Expect results in 3 days to 3 weeks.

WHEN TO GO: Knowing that most puppies need to poop soon after they eat, it is vital to keep feeding times as constant as possible. If you feed your puppy at, say, 7 AM on weekdays, then you need to maintain the same time of feeding on a weekend, even if you want to sleep in. Just remind yourself that sticking with the plan for a few weeks will pay off for years to come.

Regarding urination, dogs (like children) must learn to 'clamp down' to control their eliminations. Once learned, self-control becomes automatic. To help your pet develop self-control, let them out at the same time every day. It's difficult trying to teach your pet to control itself Monday through Friday if you take him/her outside constantly on Saturday and Sunday. Adult dogs can often hold their bladders for 8 to 12 hours, depending on diet, activity, age, health issues, etc.

Whenever you see signs that your puppy 'needs to go' outside of its usual schedule, try to distract it by playing ball or playing with a toy ... any activity that may take its mind off the 'urge'. Just be prepared to take him/her outside if it really cannot control itself yet.

NIGHT SUPERVISION: If necessary, it can be helpful to have your pet sleep in a room with people. This may help prevent accidents during the night.. Dogs usually follow the sleeping habits of their owners. Given a doggy bed or blanket, most dogs sleep the entire night. If accidents only occur at night, place a small bell on your dog's collar so as your dog becomes restless, the sound of the bell will (hopefully) awaken you so you can take him outside. If it's practical, a doggy door can be a great idea.

The SECRET CLEAN-UP and PUNISHMENT: Unfortunately, old-fashioned houstraining methods taught too many people how NOT to houstrain a puppy. All too often, puppies make a mess in a house while the owner is away. When the owners return, they foolishly start to scold the puppy, even grabbing the pup and sticking its nose in the mess, and punishing it physically. C'mon, people! This method never worked and it will *never* work! Period! Doing this nonsense isn't teaching a pup to be houstrained. It only teaches them to be fearful ... paranoid ... afraid of the owner. They begin to act 'guilty' because they have been conditioned to be punished for "something", but they cannot understand why or what for. Think about it: when the pup has made the mess, it is 'old news' in the puppy's mind. Sadly, some pet owners believe that by sticking the pup's nose in the poop that it will realize that it made a mistake. Give me a break! When a pup makes a mess and someone shoves its nose into the poop and yells at it, the puppy cannot associate this belligerent owner's act of stupidity with the fact that he/she shouldn't have pooped in the house. The ONLY time it is appropriate to scold (but not physically punish or jam its nose into the poop) is when you CATCH THEM IN THE ACT of pooping or peeing in the house. And even then, a sharp "No!" and/or a loud clap of your hands (to break their pattern) followed by picking them up and taking them outside to their potty zone, is all that is necessary.

When you do find a mess in the house without catching them in the act, do NOT scold or punish, but simply clean the mess up. But, also do NOT let the puppy watch you clean up. They actually can find it rewarding to see an owner clean up after them, and that may encourage them to poop inside the house. So, if you find an unwanted 'present' in the house, place the puppy outside (or at least, out of sight) and simply clean up the mess.

Accidents in the house can often be cleaned effectively with a 50/50 mix of water and white vinegar to help neutralize the odor. Then dry the area thoroughly.

BIG BREEDS of PUPPIES vs. LITTLE BREEDS of PUPPIES: There is no question that the larger breeds of dogs (Retrievers, Shepherds, etc) are far easier to houstrain than small breeds. Chihuahuas, Yorkies, Poodles, Dachshunds, etc, can be very difficult to houstrain. Of course, there are exceptions. But while many Retrievers are housebroken by the time they are 3 months old, the little breeds may not be houstrained until they are 5 to 6 months old ... if not longer.

THE BIGGEST MISTAKES THAT I SEE: The most common mistakes that I see with new puppy owners with regard to houstraining is (1) taking the puppy outside too often to pee and poop, and (2) a lack of consistency. Many new puppy owners take them outside every hour, but that is simply unnecessary ... and teaching them to have to go every hour. You don't want that, do you? Of course not. Even as young pups, taking them out every 2 to 3 hours is as often as you need to take them to potty. And it really helps to develop a consistent schedule and routine until your pup is housebroken. How can they get into a rhythm of learning effectively if your routine and schedule keeps changing? If you can maintain consistency for the first few weeks, it will make life easier for years.

CONCLUSION: Please refer to this handout regularly. And have all family members following the same houstraining method. If one family member insists on training one way, and another family member insists on another way, all that will do is confuse the pup, making it even more difficult to houstrain. Even if you do not follow much of the advice in this handout, at least be consistent in what you are doing. That alone will help make a difference for the better.

Dr. Bob Parrish 704-288-8620
Carolina Value Pet Care Mobile Vaccine Clinic
info@cvpet.com
www.CarolinaValuePetCare.com

