

Pawsitive Results Critter Academy

Where people learn to lead...and pets love to follow!

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Housetraining

Although it can feel time-consuming at first, fully committing yourself to the housetraining process will save you time and frustration in the long run. The recommendations in this handout will help make the process as fast and positive as possible for everyone involved.

Make the Right Behavior Rewarding!

Eliminating is a self-rewarding behavior for your puppy or dog- it relieves the pressure on his bladder and bowels- no matter where he does it! Going potty where you want him to should be **more rewarding** than going anywhere else.

- ◆ **Praise Your Puppy and Give Him a Treat** every time he eliminates outdoors. Deliver the treat at the potty spot, not after you have returned indoors.
- ◆ **Reward Pottying With Play.** Freedom indoors is a reward that must be earned by pottying outside. This helps prevent accidents during play (bouncing around can stimulate pups to potty) and uses play as a reward for going potty. If your pup hasn't gone potty, he needs to be confined to prevent accidents (see the section "Prevent Mistakes" for confinement tips). If he has just gone potty, your dog can have more freedom (still with supervision!) indoors.
- ◆ **Put Elimination On Cue** to help your dog understand what he is getting rewarded for. Take your pup to his potty spot (on leash if necessary to keep him there and prevent potty time from turning into a play session), stand quietly, and calmly repeat your potty cue, such as "hurry up". If your puppy goes potty, immediately begin praising him, and then reward him with treats as soon as he finishes. If he doesn't go within 10 minutes, then confine him and try again in 15-30 minutes. Your puppy will soon learn that his potty cue means "no fun or freedom until you potty.....but if you go, I'll throw you a party!"

Prevent Mistakes

Every time your puppy goes potty in the house, that behavior becomes a stronger habit, so preventing mistakes is important. Your puppy will go when he needs to go, and it is your job to make sure he is in the right place when nature calls.

- ◆ **Know When He'll Go.** Puppies usually need to go potty first thing in the morning, after they eat, when they wake up from a nap, after (or during!) play, and right before bedtime. Be sure to schedule potty breaks around these events.

- ◆ **Establish a Routine.** At first, puppies or new dogs should be taken out for a potty break every 1-2 hours. If the dog doesn't go potty, then he should be taken out every 15-30 minutes until he does. Then your 1-2 hour interval will begin again. Keep a record of when your dog goes potty, and note whether it was outside or in the house. This information will help you adjust your puppy's potty schedule as needed.
- ◆ **Supervise Your Dog!** Your puppy should not have opportunities to make a mistake. Shut doors or use baby gates to keep him in the same room with you, or tether him to you with a leash. Watch for signs that your puppy needs to go potty, such as sniffing, circling or acting restless.
- ◆ **Create a Short-Term Confinement Area.** There will be times when you can't supervise your puppy. If you will be gone for a length of time that your puppy can "hold it", then he can be left in his short-term confinement area. This area should be a crate or small pen that is only big enough for the puppy to stand up, turn around and lay down comfortably. If you're not sure how long your new pup can "hold it", then use these general guidelines to start: 1 hour for 8-10 week old pups, 2 hours for 11-12 week old pups, 3 hours for 12-16 week old pups, and 4 hours for dogs 4 months and older. Remember to start your count from the last time your pup went potty, not from the time you leave!
- ◆ **Create a Long-Term Confinement Area.** If you must leave your puppy for longer than he can be expected to "hold it", then he will need to be left in an area large enough to provide him with separate play, rest, eating and potty areas. Kitchens with baby gates are ideal- the floor is easily cleaned, the room is the right size, and it's in the main living area so the puppy doesn't feel like he's been tossed in a dungeon. Putting a pee pad down in the potty area can encourage the puppy to use that area for pottying and reduce cleaning chores.

When your puppy has gone 2 weeks without an accident in the house, you can increase the time between potty breaks by 30 minutes. You can continue to increase the time in this manner until your puppy is going 4 hours between potty breaks. Now you can begin increasing their living space by 1 room for every 2 weeks they are accident-free (until now, they were either confined or in the same room as you being supervised). If your puppy's housetraining begins to deteriorate, go back to the previous step and wait until your puppy has gone at least another 2 weeks without an accident before you try again.

When Accidents Happen

- ◆ **Never Punish Mistakes!** It takes time for puppies to develop control and to learn to communicate their needs to us. If you punish accidents, your puppy may decide that it is dangerous to go potty in front of you, and this will make housetraining even harder!
- ◆ **If You Find an Accident** after the fact, put your puppy somewhere else (so he doesn't "help") while you clean it up with an enzymatic cleaner.
- ◆ **If You Catch Your Puppy** going potty in the house, interrupt him without scaring him (Ah! Ah! usually works well) and hustle him outside to finish his business. Praise your puppy if he finishes going potty outside.
- ◆ **If Multiple Accidents Occur** in the same area, you may need to make the puppy's area smaller or take potty breaks more frequently. If you can't block the puppy's access, make the area less attractive by covering it with carpet runners with the points up.