



SECRETS TO RAISING A PUPPY

The Absolute Dogs Way



Puppy Survival 101 House-training Edition



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TOILET TRAINING

Toilet training is inevitable when you bring a new puppy home.

You get to shape your puppy's understanding of your expectations. The stronger you go, the quicker it's over! If you're really vigilant for 3 weeks, that's 3 weeks of time well spent.

Every dog and puppy present a unique path, and knowing what variables can be modified to set your puppy up most successfully is essential. Having this knowledge can help to make house training your puppy much easier.

It is very normal to have obstacles. House training can be affected by changes in diet, a change or changes in environment, medical conditions such as a UTI (urinary tract infection), weather conditions (who wants to go out in the rain?!), the size of your puppy, etc.

There are a few things to recognise in regards to house training when you bring a puppy into your home.

- They do not innately know that they should not toilet in your home.
- They do not innately know that they should signal their human when they DO have to toilet outside.
- Usually, with some exceptions, a puppy will not toilet where they sleep or eat. However, if they can pee and also avoid where they've peed to sleep, they most certainly will.
- A crate, ex-pen, or small space designed for safe confinement can play a significant role in house training success if used strategically when 100% undivided attention cannot be given.

HOW CAN WE COMMUNICATE THE EXPECTATIONS OF HOUSE TRAINING

The best way to let your puppy know in a way that makes sense to them is providing them with immediate reinforcement when they do something correctly.

For house training that correct something would be eliminating where ever it is you have designated as the toileting area.

To communicate your delight in their great decision making, wait until they are done eliminating so that you do not interrupt them. Their attention spans are short and distraction can cause accidents in the house simply because they forgot what their mission was in the first place! To reinforce appropriate elimination, you can:



Praise your puppy verbally in a way they find rewarding (loose, wiggly, excited body language when you praise indicates they're enjoying the experience). Happy, yet calm, praise is perfect feedback.

Stroke your puppy gently for a few seconds, making sure not to pet them in a way that produces too much excitement (deep, slow petting)

Reward your puppy with their daily rations/food in a calm way

***Better yet, surprise your puppy with a different strategy for reinforcement each time so that the reward is generous, and unpredictable.**

If the reward experience is a party your puppy may struggle to focus on what they need to do in anticipation of having more fun celebrating with you when they come outside to toilet again.

The most important expectation of reinforcement should be that your puppy responds well to whatever strategy you use. Is the behaviour you are rewarding improving? Then keep up the good work!

The only exception to the rule of reinforcing your puppy for eliminating appropriately would be any potty breaks during the wee hours of the morning (2 AM potty breaks are fun for no one!).

Nothing fun happens after 10 PM and before the desired wake up time in the morning. Any potty breaks during this time frame should be boring, uneventful, and efficient. The puppy is allowed to potty (not play) and they are returned to their bed without ceremony or fuss.



HOW DO I PREVENT ACCIDENTS?

Often, and as long as it possible to do so, it can help to carry the puppy to an area where you would like them to go and then place them down. This prevents them from going anywhere along the route that may not be appropriate (just before leaving the house through the front door, for example).

It is helpful to know that the frequency of your puppy's needing to go toilet will fluctuate based on their activity level, water intake, sleeping and nap times, food intake, size, and their individual elimination preferences. It is also important to note that smaller puppies may need to go more frequently.

In the first couple of months of bringing your puppy home the reality is that they won't be 100% house trained for some time (anywhere from 6 months to a year, though some are much faster than others – comparisons with past or current dogs should be avoided).

Accidents do happen, and without a doubt, they are never our puppy's fault. They are navigating a human world and are just babies. They can't reason why it's not desirable to toilet inside vs. outside. They do not have accidents out of spite, and often it just comes down to they needed to go, so they went.

Our rules are foreign to them, which is why having a clear way to guide them (because they certainly cannot speak or understand our language as much as we would love them to!) is key.

HOW LONG CAN YOUR PUPPY HOLD IT?

AGE	DAYTIME	OVERNIGHT
8 weeks	1-1.5 hours	3-4 hours
10 weeks	2-3 hours	4-5 hours
12 weeks	3-3.5 hours	5-6 hours
16 weeks	4 hours	6-7 hours

***Note:** These are approximations. While it can help to have a visual, every puppy will be different and these are averages. Also note that a small puppy's times may be reduced as they will need to go more often.

A puppy can easily need to toilet 6-8 times throughout the day.

Understanding and staying aware of your puppy's physical or neurological limitations due to their age and size can help to keep realistic expectations. Puppies under 12 weeks of age often struggle with bladder control so it isn't uncommon for them to have a hard time holding between toileting times.

MANAGEMENT PLAYS A MAJOR ROLE IN PREVENTING ACCIDENTS...

Management is when you set up the environment around your puppy in a way that makes it almost impossible for poor decisions to be made and almost certain that the path to good decisions is clear and unavoidable.

For example, during the early stages of your puppy's house training and before they appear to have a grasp of the concept, it can be (and is) very helpful to limit their access to larger areas of space, especially without direct supervision. This is where having a crate, ex-pen, or small confined space that is puppy proofed can help to make sure your puppy doesn't have accidents.

If your puppy cannot avoid the mess, they are less likely to create it in the first place! Crates and other safety setups are perfect for this management strategy.

HOW DO I KNOW IF MY PUPPY MAY NEED TO GO?

1. Eaten within the last half hour
2. Played actively for more than 15-20 minutes
3. Drank water within the last hour
4. Had a very active day with more than usual water intake – this will impact how frequently they go for the rest of the day
5. Just woken up from sleeping, no matter how short the nap
6. Had a fun, reinforcement filled training session within the last half hour
7. Your puppy appears to be overly distracted and is sniffing the ground
8. Your puppy seems to be moving toward the door or in the direction of the most frequently used exit (hopeful thinking?)
9. Anything exciting occurred within the last half hour including visitors coming over, spending time around another doggy friend, interacting with exciting children, etc.
10. A diet change can increase a puppy's need to toilet.

Note: These may occur simultaneously or separate from one another.



MY PUPPY COMES FROM OUTSIDE, IMMEDIATELY AFTER THEY'VE JUST GONE, AND HAS AN ACCIDENT IN THE HOUSE?! WHY?!

Puppies are baby animals and have no idea that they are doing anything wrong. What may have happened?

Your puppy may have been mid-potty and got distracted by something in the environment (or even you!). As a result, they didn't finish and still had to go when they came inside.

Puppies are easily distracted and may (okay, may is more of a will) lose focus because the world is an exciting, enticing place. A leaf could have flown by, a squirrel may have leapt up onto a fence, a smelly and interesting aroma may have wafted their way, or a blade of grass may have stirred in the wind, enticing the puppy from the task at hand.

Remember to be forgiving and to take a deep breath when an accident happens. Dogs are very in the now creatures and punishment can only cause the behaviour to escalate. Simply put your puppy away to clean up (so they don't try to play with the cleaning materials), use an enzyme based cleaner to clean away the residual odor and dissuade from that area's use again, and say, "I am not alone. Other puppy owners have survived this and so will I!"

You've got this! Before you know it your puppy will have mastered the house training process and you'll forget just how time consuming having a puppy can be.

WHAT DO YOU WANT YOUR PUPPY TO DO?

WOOF
WOOF

- Alert you to when they need to go
- Eliminate in an appropriate place



HOW CAN YOU ACHIEVE THIS?

Following step-by-step process assumes that any time outside of the steps is spent either in a space meant for rest and relaxation (a crate, for example) or that you are being 100% vigilant with your puppy if they are not in a space that requires less supervision. We will discuss levels of supervision below.



Step 1

When any criteria from the "How do I know if my puppy needs to potty?" section is met, pick up your puppy and carry them outside.

Step 2

Go to a designated toileting area where you do not play games or do exciting things with your puppy. Place them on the ground.

Step 3

Provide a verbal cue such as "Hurry Up". They will learn to eliminate when they hear the cue.

Step 4

Calmly celebrate with your puppy.

LEVELS OF SUPERVISION

Level 1 - Limited Supervision

- Crate
- Small Ex-Pen with limited space

** In both a crate and/or ex-pen set up to emulate a crate-like space, your puppy should only have room to turn around and lay down.

Level 2 – Awareness and Peripheral Supervision

- Ex-Pen (that allows some free movement)
- Small gated area (1x1 meter)

** Your puppy has some freedom of movement. Because they can move around freely they are more likely to have a toileting accident so supervision is important.

Level 3 – Steady and Uninterrupted Vigilance

- Loose in a room or larger space
- Confined to a kitchen area or other area with easy to clean flooring
- In someone else's home

** This leaves a lot of room for your puppy to make the wrong choice (a choice they aren't even aware is wrong). Strong vigilance is vital to intercept any pre-toileting hints and to take them to the appropriate location immediately.

**What if my puppy has an accident? What do I do then?
Great question! Clean it up! That's it.**

We are providing a “Daily Toilet Training Worksheet” for you separately to help you and your puppy survive the Housetraining process together!