

House Breaking Your Puppy

Whoops! During the last couple of months we've received lots of questions on the easiest way to get these new family members housebroken. We just added a pup to our family, so we're working on this too. I'll give you my personal opinions but just like anything else, use common sense and your own best judgment. Start off by getting a well-made, puppy proof crate sized for your full-grown dog. Then use a divider to make it small enough for your pup. The size of the crate should be no bigger than what it takes for your dog to lay down and turn around. It seems small, but anything larger will allow your dog to soil on one side so he can sleep in the other. If he still soils his crate pull out any bedding. The crate should be used for your dog's bed and for an area to relax in when you can't keep a close eye on him. The crate is never used for punishment and should be located so he can be near you (bed room, family room, etc). Make the dog happy to be there with treats and toys. If he whimpers a little that's ok. If he "flips out" or is acting panicky, let him out until he calms down a little, then put him back in with lots of praise and treats. For a pup under 6 months, the rule of thumb for the number of hours he should be left in his crate is his age in months plus 1, so an 8-week pup (2 months) can be left comfortably for 3 hours. No dog should be left longer than 7-8 hours.

So when the pup is out of the crate, what do we do? Just like with anything else you're training your dog to do, it takes consistency. Here are the basic rules:

1. Set a schedule/routine that you and the dog can live with. The biggest mistake that folks make is forcing a pup into a busy household schedule. For the first few months, your pup will need to go when he needs to go, not when you want him to, so you'll need to adjust your schedule to meet his needs for a while. Also, eating makes your pup want to go, so leaving food out all the time works against you. Instead, feed 2-3 times a day. Whatever your dog will eat in 15-20 minutes is plenty. After that, pick it up. Also, if you always use the same door, your pup may go to it to tell you he needs to go out.
2. Prevent accidents. Don't wait for your pup to have an accident so you can correct him. Instead, look for opportunities to praise him for doing the right thing. 8-12 week pups will go roughly every 2 hours while they're awake. Take them out about this often and use a phrase (find a spot, go potty) that tells them what there supposed to do. Do not play with or praise your dog until he goes. If he doesn't go after 5-10 minutes, go inside, put him in the crate for 5-10 minutes and start over. Once he goes, praise and reward and then go inside so that he knows that going outside to play is different than going outside to poop. There are certain times when the dog should definitely go:
 - a. First thing in the morning, before anything.
 - b. After he eats. Even though he may have just gone, eating may make him go again!
 - c. After naps.
 - d. During play. This is a tough one and when a lot of mistakes happen. Running around and getting excited is what pups do. Keep an eye on them and don't

let young pups play for too long if they haven't been outside for a while. If they've been running around, take them out just in case. If they begin to pace, sniff, or walk in circles, they're telling you "Take me out".

3. Correct accidents only if you see them do it; not one second later. If you correct when they're not "going", they'll have no idea what you're correcting them for. Correction does NOT mean rubbing their nose in it or spanking. A quick and loud "NO" with you running at them startles them enough most of the time and makes them stop whatever they're doing. Take them straight outside and praise if they go. Clean up/blot mistakes with water followed by a good enzyme cleaner that breaks down everything and gets rid of the smell. If you clean with soap or other cleaners, they'll mask the smell so you won't smell it, but your dog will. That smell will want to make him go in this spot.

This is just a quick summary of basic housebreaking rules. Every dog is different and some things may work while others don't. Be patient and consistent and remember that your pup wants to please you, so don't get too frustrated. Good luck.