




HOUSETRAINING

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As with most things in life, there are hard ways and there are easy ways to get things done. Rubbing a puppy's nose in a mess is an inappropriate way to housetrain. Using ample amounts of supervision and positive reinforcement is the easy way.

STARTING OFF ON THE RIGHT TRACK







The first course of action in housetraining is to promote the desired behavior. You need to:

-  Designate an appropriate elimination area outdoors
-  Frequently guide your dog there to do his business
-  Heartily praise him when he goes

By occasionally giving a food reward immediately after your dog finishes, you can encourage him to eliminate in the desired area. The odor left from previous visits to that area would quickly mark it as the place for the pup to do his business.

TIMING IS IMPORTANT!

A six – eight week old puppy should be taken outdoors every one to three hours. Older puppies can generally wait longer between outings. Most puppies should be taken out:

-  After waking in the morning
-  After naps
-  After meals
-  After playing or training
-  After being left alone
-  Immediately before being put to bed





ELIMINATING ON COMMAND

To avoid spending a lot of time waiting for your puppy to get the job done, you may want to teach him to eliminate on command. Each time he is in the act of eliminating, simply repeat a unique command, such as “hurry up” or “potty”, in an upbeat tone of voice. After a few weeks of

training, you will notice that when you say the command your puppy will begin pre-elimination sniffing, circling, and then eliminate shortly after you give the command. Be sure to praise him for his accomplishments.




FEEDING SCHEDULE

Most puppies will eliminate within an hour after eating. Once you take control of your puppy's feeding schedule, you will have some control over when he needs to eliminate.

-  Schedule your puppy's dinner times so that you will be available to let him out after eating.
-  Avoid giving your puppy a large meal just prior to confining him or he may have to eliminate when you are not around to take him out. Schedule feeding two to three times daily on a consistent schedule.
-  Have food available for only 30 to 40 minutes, and then remove it.
-  The last feeding of the day should be completed several hours before he is confined for the night. By controlling the feeding schedule, exercise sessions, confinement periods, and trips outdoors to the elimination area, your puppy will quickly develop a reliable schedule for eliminating.

EXPECT SOME MISTAKES

Left on his own, the untrained puppy is very likely to make a mistake. Close supervision is a very important part of training. DO not consider your puppy housetrained until he has gone at least four consecutive weeks without eliminating in the house. For older dogs, this period should be even longer. Until then:

-  Your puppy should constantly be within eyesight
-  Baby gates can be helpful to control movement throughout the house and to aid supervision
-  Keep them in the crate when unsupervised

When you are away from home, sleeping, or if you are just too busy to closely monitor your pet's activities, confine him to a small, safe area in the home.




NERVOUS WETTING

If your puppy squats and urinates when he greets you, he may have a problem called submissive urination. Dogs and puppies that urinate during greetings are very sensitive and should never be scolded when they do this, since punishment inevitably makes the problem worse.

Most young puppies will grow out of this behavior if you are calm, quiet, and avoid reaching toward the head during greetings. Another helpful approach is to calmly ask your dog to sit for a tasty treat each time someone greets him.




DIRECT HIM AWAY FROM PROBLEM AREAS

Urine and fecal odor should be thoroughly removed to keep your dog from returning to areas of the home where he made a mess.

-  Be sure to use a good commercial product manufactured specifically to clean up doggy odors. Follow the manufacturer's recommendations for usage.
-  If a carpeted area has been soaked with urine, be sure to saturate it with the clean up product and not merely spray the surface.
-  Rooms in the home where your dog has had frequent mistakes should be closed off for several months. He should only be allowed to enter when accompanied by a family member.

DON'T MAKE THINGS WORSE

It is a rare dog or puppy that can be housetrained without making an occasional mess, so you need to be ready to handle the inevitable problems.

-  Do not rely on harsh punishment to correct mistakes. This approach usually does not work, and may actually delay training.
-  An appropriate correction consists of simply providing a moderate, startling distraction. You should only do this when you see your dog in the act of eliminating in the wrong place.
-  A sharp noise, such as a loud "No" or a quick stomp on the floor, is all that is usually needed to stop the behavior. Just do not be too loud or your pet may learn to avoid eliminating in front of you, even outdoors.

PRACTICE PATIENCE

Do not continue to scold or correct your dog after he has stopped soiling. When he stops, quickly take him outdoors so that he will finish in the appropriate area and be praised. Never rub your dog's nose in a mess. There is absolutely no way this will help training, and may actually make him afraid of you.

SUCCESS!






The basic principles of housetraining are pretty simple, but a fair amount of patience is required. The most challenging part is always keeping an eye on your active dog or puppy. If you maintain control, take your dog outdoors frequently, and consistently praise the desirable behaviour, soon you should have a house trained canine companion.

PUPPIES AND CHEWING

Puppies are notorious chewers – hence the adage – and they’ll nosh on everything from handbags to furniture to theme papers about Tom Sawyer. It’s not that they’re intentionally trying to anger you. (Though we know you’ll likely have to count to ten once you see your Italian briefcase dismembered.) Pups, you see, are simply following Mother Nature’s instructions. They’re hard-wired to cut their teeth and they need something (or someone) to help them do it. Moreover, they use their mouths as a means to explore their environment, even to reduce tension. Many alleviate boredom this way. Others are just hungry for a snack. So, how do you cope with Mr. Motor Mouth’s habits?





KEEP ‘EM BUSY




You wouldn’t leave a 2-year-old child in a room alone for five hours, and the same rule should apply to puppies. Your furry whippersnapper needs to be stimulated physically and cognitively – often. This means:

-  Offering a variety of safe chew toys or treats like puppy biscuits or pig’s ears. (Never give puppies chicken bones, as they can fracture and lead to significant damage or death.)
-  Providing plenty of exercise, even if that means hiring a dog walker. (You might actually save money in the end when you realize you’ve preserved your baseball card collection.)
-  Thinking up games that get him to use his noggin. (Try a round of “fetch” or hide a treat inside a hollow ball.)
-  Attending to his needs quickly so that he doesn’t go on a boredom binge.
-  Feeding him meals at regular intervals so that he doesn’t go looking for dinner.

TEACH YOUR PUP TO “CHEW SMART”

If chewing is unavoidable, you might as well get him to eat the right stuff. Here’s how to do it:



-  Praise your fur ball each and every time he chomps on something assigned to him. Reinforce this behaviour on occasion by offering him an edible treat.
-  Do not confuse Pup by first offering him an old slipper then heckling him when he eats your mother-in-law’s loafers. Puppies are indeed smart, but they can’t read labels. Make sure he knows what’s his and what’s yours.
-  Spray a commercial anti-chew solution, a bitter or hot tasting spray to goodies you’d like to safeguard. He’ll take one bite and avoid them later.
-  If he goes after particular objects again and again simply remove them for a while. Reintroduce them at a later time.

-  If an object of affection is too big to hide – a recliner, for instance – then try moving it to a different location in hopes that Pup will latch onto something else.
-  Motion-activated alarms serve as a deterrent
-  Try booby traps. Stack empty soft drink cans around the leg of the chair. The loud noise the cans make when tipped over might be enough to scare your puppy away forever.

EXERCISE SMART DISCIPLINE

Pups caught in the act should be given a simple verbal reprimand followed by encouragement to chew on an appropriate toy. Practice this: “Chesapeake, no chew!” Then throw your canine a bone.




WHAT NOT TO DO

-  Verbal reprimands alone can backfire by teaching the pet to be sneaky about chewing or by teaching him not to chew at all – even toys – in your presence.
-  Never spank, slap, kick or otherwise physically punish a puppy. Not only is this nasty behaviour on your part, but also it could result in your pet becoming hand shy or a fear-biter.

TEACHING YOUR PUPPY TO MIND

GETTING STARTED

Expert behaviorists say you can begin training your little one as early as seven weeks old, providing your sessions are presented as gently play. Give him a few days to adjust to his new life with you, and then begin. Remember that puppies have very short attention spans, so you'll want to school your pet for only a few minutes per lesson. That said you could try mini-sessions several times per day. When your pup is between four and six months of age, you can begin formal obedience lessons. A few pointers:

-  Whenever possible, try to arrange the situation so your pup can't fail. For example, throw only one ball into the backyard and ask him to "fetch the ball." (Giving him access to several toys at once would add too many variables to the game.)
-  Bribery does wonders. Reward desired behaviors with praise, food, and toys.
-  Be consistent. If you don't want Zeus to jump on neighbors in greeting, don't let him jump on you either when you walk in the front door. Also, use the same simple words or phrases for the same specific behaviors.

BASIC COMMANDS

As anyone who has tried to rein in a crotch-sniffer will tell you, your pooch must be able to respond to a handful of basic commands instantly. Here are a few that might get you out of an embarrassing (or an emergency) situation:

Off/No Jumping: Back up when you see your pup coming towards you and say "Off!" or "No jumping!" Reward him when his feet are planted on the ground.

In Your Kennel: Present your pet with a treat, then put it in his kennel while saying "Kennel!" (or "Go to bed!"). When he goes inside, praise him, but don't shut the door yet. Practice this scenario, and then begin closing the door, rewarding him with a treat through the bars. Gradually extend the time in the crate. (A word of caution: If he whimpers, don't let him out, as that rewards the behaviour.) When you do open the door for good, don't do cartwheels. You don't want coming out to be better than going in.

Speak: Show the puppy a treat and say "Speak!" (You may have to actually bark yourself so that he gets the idea. DO this inside so your neighbors don't think you've gone to the dogs.) Once he barks, praise him.

Quiet: After Zeus masters barking, really get him going. Then, suddenly bring your finger to your lips and say "Quiet!" He will likely be startled and immediately stop barking. Reward him effusively.

Give: To help avoid unwanted aggression and guarding behaviour, teach your puppy to hand over his toys and food. Begin by offering him a toy-for-food trade. Say “Give!” as you make the exchange.

Get it/leave it: Leash your dog and go for a walk. Toss a treat in front of him and say, “Get it!” Once he masters this concept, try asking him to “Leave it!” Drop the treat. When he goes for it, gently bop him on the nose while saying, “Leave it!” Make a game out of “getting” and “leaving”.

Sit: Place a treat in front of Zeus then gently move it upwards over his head. He’ll raise his head to follow your hand and, in the process, lower his rump. Push his hindquarters down to the ground with your free hand while saying, “Sit!”

Lay: Present your pet with a treat then lower it to the ground while saying, “Lay!” Try gently guiding his shoulder to the floor. Give the reward when he lies down, even if it is only momentarily.

Stay: Have your pup sit down. Back away from him a few steps while saying, “Stay!” Then praise him for doing just that. After a split second, reward him. Always praise him while he is still waiting, not after he gets up so that he will associate the word with the correct action.

Come: Carry treats with you throughout the day and randomly call to your pup using his name, “Br. Bean, come!” When he races to you, reward him.




Training your puppy can be a hugely rewarding enterprise for the both of you. Not only will your pet be manageable at home, but in public when you happen to run into your boss who, by the way, is terrified of dogs.

SOCIALIZING YOUR PUPPY

When you made the decision to adopt a puppy versus a full-grown dog, you probably did so in part because you knew what you'd get. "Yes, there will be peeing and chewing," you thought to yourself as you looked over the litter of downy pups. "But at least I won't have to contend with the shadowy history of why the shelter staff nicknamed my pet 'Tiger.'" This gave you great comfort. Until, however, you got home and realized that a clean slate is, well, a clean slate. Not only will you be responsible for housebreaking your pet, but you'll have to socialize him, too. You'll want to make sure he's not only obedient, but also friendly to all kinds of people – and animals. It is a lofty goal but you can get there with hard work and patience (on both your part and that of the pup). We've got a few suggestions to help get you started.




STAGES OF PUPPY DEVELOPMENT


Before you can develop a strategy to socialize your pet, it is important to know something about how puppies are wired.

-  Seven to eight weeks: many breeders typically wean and release pups to their new homes at this age. This is an ideal time to adopt, as puppies are becoming more independent and are exploring their environment.
-  Eight to ten weeks: Your little guy will likely go through a "fear" period. He'll stick close to you and will frighten easily. Try to limit noise and keep new experiences non-threatening.
-  Ten weeks of age: Puppies enter a "juvenile" stage in which he will be more inquisitive and ready to explore. This phase lasts until adulthood. It is a terrific time to introduce new experiences and work on socializing your pet. (Please note that some puppies go through a second "fear" period around four or five months).

MEETING NEW KINDS OF PEOPLE




The world is full of different types of individuals, so it is essential that your pet can relate to others. Always reward your animal with treats when he demonstrates desired behavior.

-  Begin by introducing your puppy to quiet friends on his own home turf for short periods of time. Invite one or two neighbors over for a drink on the patio and to scratch your puppy's ears. When greeting your little one, have guests crouch down low and allow him to approach them on his own time. This will give your pup a greater sense of control.
-  Once your pet masters "home" visits, try taking him to the park or dog run. Let him decide who to meet and for how long. You never want to force your pet into a situation where he is fearful. (Of course, make sure the person he approaches wants to be greeted. Some people are afraid of dogs – even puppies).
-  It is also important to introduce your puppy to people of different races, ethnic backgrounds, ages and professions as some dogs might develop an aversion to people who don't look like you and thus seem "unusual" to them.

 Once he begins to enjoy new adults, introduce him to older children for short amounts of time. Supervise the visit, of course, as kids can play roughly and may scare your pup. If you don't know any children personally, take the pup to a park and he'll likely draw them in on his own. (Please note: Even if you don't have kids in your family, it is imperative to socialize puppies with them. If dogs don't interact with children early in life, they often develop aggressive behavior towards them later. Small children who race around and make high-pitched squealing noises can trigger prey instincts in dogs that are not used to them.)



GETTING ALONG WITH OTHER DOGS

Even puppies that consider themselves to be nearly human will have to learn to get along in the canine community. At the very minimum, you'll come across another dog (or his scent) during your daily walks. Thus, he needs to practice doggy speak.

-  Head to the park to find poochy playmates. Allow cordial sniffing and some play, but back off if your puppy seems intimidated or if the other parties have poor manners.
-  Consider hosting doggie play dates. Invite friends to bring their dogs to your garden or backyard for a game of Frisbee.
-  Please note that dog-to-dog socialization is hugely important for breeds that are dominant or aggressive.


GETTING ALONG WITH OTHER PETS

Your new puppy and your Siamese cat might never be best friends but you can at least encourage them to tolerate one another.

-  Begin by keeping the newcomer in a kennel and allowing the resident pet to "visit" him through the safety of the bars. Gradually extend the length of visits before allowing the two to meet face-to-face. Supervise these meetings until you feel confident that all will go well.
-  Please note that no matter how well behaved and well-socialized your puppy is, he will likely still try to chase animals he considers prey. It would be doubly unpleasant for both your bunny and your three-year-old to witness a National Geographic hunting scenario, so we suggest keeping Fluffy safely locked in her cage and out of your pup's reach.

COPING WITH NEW EXPERIENCES

The vacuum cleaner can be a terrifying thing for a young puppy. All is quiet, and then suddenly this towering devil growls to life and begins sucking up dog hair from the couch. To avoid frightening him (and having to clean up a mess), introduce your pup to new experiences gradually.

 Let him check out the quieted vacuum/car/baby toy/hair clippers by himself. Then, place him a safe distance away before turning it on for a moment or two. After turning it off, stand by the object and call your pup to you. Reward him. Repeat this lesson, extending the amount of time the sound is running. Finally, call him to you while the noise it actually going. He'll eventually see that the television/fan/washing machine is no big deal.

RECOMMENDED READING

Neil, David H., and Clarice Rutherford. *How to Raise a Puppy You Can Live With*. Alpine Publications, Loveland, Colorado, 1981.

The Monks of New Skete. *The Art of Raising a Puppy*. Little, Brown and Company, 1991.

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