



Effective House Training

Introduction

It is very well worth planning how you will house train your puppy **before** you collect him or her, if you have the opportunity. The following explains a simple, kind method of house training that, when followed carefully should see your puppy becoming clean and dry as he or she physically matures. At your initial home visit session we can discuss how this method can be tailored to suit your family and lifestyle.

New owners should not underestimate the time and commitment that this involves, but please remember that the time spent house training not only teaches your puppy to 'go' outside, but helps develop the bond between your family and their dog, as well.

Why are dogs 'house trainable'?

Dogs are born as 'nest' animals. That is to say, their mother gives birth to them and rears them in a nest until they are able to leave it under their own steam at about three weeks old. The mother dog keeps the puppies clean and dry throughout their immobile time in the nest, thus keeping the nest clean and developing the instinct in the puppies that they don't mess or wet the nest. It is a tremendously powerful instinct in creatures hardly able to walk or see. In order for that instinct to be allowed to develop, it is essential that the nest has a defined edge so that as soon as the puppies are able to wobble away to a bowl of solids, they are also able to wobble out of

the nest to relieve themselves. If your puppy was raised in an enclosed bed and had to relieve himself in it, there will be additional work needed to redevelop the natural instinct properly. Similarly if a puppy had a bed and play area of the same material, he will not know which was which. Please ask for help if you know this applies to your puppy.

Tried and Tested?

Most people know of someone who has trained their dog by rubbing their dog's nose in his own mess, or who has said "the dog knew it had done wrong because he looked guilty". The dog is now house trained so that method works - right? No. The method of rubbing a dog's nose in the mess is cruel and totally unnecessary because the dog cannot comprehend what he is meant to be learning from that punishment. The puppy that looks guilty when you return from shopping may have made the mess hours ago and won't know why he's being told off. He isn't looking guilty; he's using submissive body language because he has sensed that the owner is cross.

As previously mentioned the dog's instinct to relieve him/herself outside the nest is very strong and will quite often eventually prevail despite all manner of inappropriate house training methods. Those that continue to soil the house hopefully end up re-learning with enlightened owners, a dog trainer or end up in rescue centres labelled as hopeless cases. It is worth considering also the damage done to the owner/dog relationship in cases where the dogs eventually end up house trained in spite of the methods used.

Good News!

The great news is, there is an easy way to house train your puppy. All you need is commitment, understanding, the right

attitude and the right equipment.

Commitment

At this stage you should have this in bucket loads! Harness the whole family's enthusiasm and channel it into house training.

Understanding

The first thing to really grasp is that until your puppy is at least twelve if not sixteen or more weeks of age he or she will have little or no control - they can't help it. Imagine caring for a human baby with no nappy, you wouldn't expect a three month old baby to wait, and a baby dog is no different. So, anticipation is everything.

The Right Attitude

With commitment and understanding comes the right attitude. If you understand that he/she can't help it, what is there to be annoyed about? If you know it's the quickest way to a happy, healthy, house trained young dog, you will be cool about the repeated trips into the garden on cold, wet evenings. Above all else, stay calm. Even if you are able to keep your voice calm, if you are seething on the inside because Buster has just done a wee on your new rug *again*, he will feel your annoyance from your body language and demeanour which can be counter productive and destructive to all your hard work so far.

It is also important to agree a plan if more than one person lives with the dog. Who is responsible for what? Who is going to clean up the mess? Who is going to take puppy outside each time? If you have children, spend sometime role playing what they should do when they spot puppy weeing or pooing in the house. Instead of shrieking from the other end of the house

"Mum, Dad, Buster's weeing on the rug again", get them to practise walking calmly to you or calling you gently. Shrieking, running and arm waving are part of being a child, but if you can encourage calm at specific times it will benefit your puppy enormously.

The Right Equipment

The best way forward is to train your puppy to go outside right from the start. Training onto paper may be the only option if puppy has to be left alone sometimes, but essentially paper training means training twice - once onto paper then again to go outside. So, newspaper when he's alone and a soft puppy or cat collar and lead when you're are in!

You will also need some cheap biological washing liquid (easier to dissolve by hand than powder) mixed with water to 40 degrees+, a small bowl or bucket especially for the job, rubber gloves or disposable latex gloves, kitchen towel and old cloths. If you've got a spare mop for hard floors, that will be useful. You may wish to look at restricting your puppy's access to certain areas of your house using dog or baby gates, or investing in a puppy playpen or crate (see page 27).

You will need lots of small moist tasty treats, (see page 7) by the door that you will be taking your puppy out through to the toilet. Making sure that your coat is there ready will make life more comfortable for you.

For winter puppies with very short coats, you may wish to consider a coat as he or she will be spending several minutes, many times a day in the garden. This may also apply to puppies who have never been outside. Bear in mind though, that you will need to get outside very quickly!

Consider life from a puppy's point of view.

Buster arrives at his new home, totally different to the place he was born and his mum and siblings are no-where to be seen. He may be excited, he may be scared, but he won't be relaxed so very soon he will need to relieve himself. His instinct will tell him to go outside the nest, but he doesn't know where the nest exit is, so ends up weeing on the carpet three times in a very short space of time. Each time noise, dragons and monsters descend from above, grab him and put him outside alone where it is cold and hostile. On the fourth occasion he checks for monsters and goes where they can't see or catch him - easy to do in a dark kitchen at night or behind the sofa!

Angel arrives at her new home and is left to explore her new world, which is only as large as the kitchen, with a nice bed. Soon after arriving, the nice teddy bear takes Angel out into the garden for a good sniff around on her new lead. There are so many things to smell and look at with the teddy bear happily chatting to her. When she needs to wee, she goes right there on the lawn without a moment's thought. But what a lovely surprise, the teddy bear says 'good girl' as she does it and gives Angel a nice piece of liver. Angel loves her teddy bears. Not only do they know when she needs to go, but they go with her and give her treats for fertilising the grass. Even when she has to go in the house, she is almost unaware that she has done it, because there is no reaction when she does, so as soon as she's able, she makes every effort to get to the garden to get the treats.

Buster was taught not to wee in front of humans. Angel was taught to wee outside.

How to Actually Do It!

Up to at least twelve weeks of age, you puppy will need to go

outside:

- Immediately after waking up
- After eating
- At least every hour
- After play or excitement
- Whenever you see the signs - circling, sniffing the floor etc

So the first step is to encourage your puppy to come outside with you at all of these times. Assess your pup's nature in order to gauge how best to do this. For example you might play 'chase me' to the door, or gently call your calmer pup with you as you go.

There may be times when you will need to scoop and poop - scooping him up just as his bottom goes down to start going, but generally try to get him to follow you to the door under his own steam. This is so that he knows where to go when the time comes to ask to go out.

Take him outside on his lead, with treats in your pocket, to the spot where you would like him to relieve himself. Allow him to sniff around the area and investigate as much as he wants. Initially, you may find that even if he was about to poo in the house, it will take a while for the urge to come back after being taken outside. The key is patience and observation. You should stay out here, really, for as long as it takes, but if he hasn't performed after ten minutes, go back inside and try again in another ten minutes. When he performs, give him a really tasty treat and praise. If using a clicker, the click must come as soon as he finishes, maximising the learning (he may stop if you click as he goes). If you would like to train your puppy to 'go' on request, use a particular word as he goes. Try 'be quick' or 'hurry up' rather than 'tiddles' or 'widdles'!

Later on, when he has learnt what the word means, you will be able to ask him to go before you go out, lessening the chance of accidents on the floor when you return.

If you would like him to use a specific spot to go to the loo, or if he doesn't learn how to ask to go out, please ask for details of how to do this.

Try to remember that even if it's 11pm, raining and freezing, he probably doesn't want to be out there any more than you do. He won't know yet what he has to do to get back indoors, so talk to him, happily and cheerfully, and if he doesn't perform in five minutes, go back in, but be prepared to go out again in another five minutes.

Dealing with accidents in the house

Your puppy has little or no muscle control until about sixteen weeks, so he is not messing on your best carpet on purpose, he just can't help it, so there is no mileage in telling him off. During the early weeks he won't be learning 'my bladder is full, I must go into the garden', because he isn't getting enough warning to do that. He is learning 'when I wee in the garden I get a treat'. The more times he successfully goes in the garden, the more you will build on his instincts and the conditioning his mother provided. This way, as soon as he starts to physically mature and get warnings, he will head for the garden automatically.

In the first few weeks, you may feel that you are spending half your time in the garden and the other half cleaning, but with commitment and perseverance you should soon start to see patterns emerging, making the job easier.

The key is always anticipation, look for his patterns. Does he need to go out five minutes or fifteen minutes after eating?

When you see him going in the house, encourage him outside as before, as he can associate with what he has just done. There is little point if you find it even a minute or later as he will already be into something else.

Ignore any accidents in the house at this age, and be very aware of your non verbal reaction to accidents in the house. If he senses your annoyance, he will start to get stressed and stress is proven to interfere with learning.

Cleaning

Dogs can smell where they have been, long after you have cleaned it with the most efficient disinfectant, and if they can smell it, they will go there again. A biological washing product will remove all traces of the accident. Blot as much of the urine as you can with kitchen paper (you'll need a lot and tread on the paper), then soak the area with a dilute solution of biological washing liquid, making sure it reaches down to the underlay, then blot again. For solid accidents, flush the solid away and treat the area as for urine. Diarrhoea on carpets is about as bad as it gets! Scrape as much you can up, use a carpet cleaner to get the stain out and finish with the biological washing solution.

It's a good idea to make up a separate bowl or spray bottle of biological solution, and to buy a different colour of cloth and kitchen paper to your usual household ones. Find somewhere to keep the kit away from children and as far away from human crockery etc as possible.

Crate/Den Training (see page 27 also)

Crates and puppy dens can be tremendously useful with puppies, but they must be used in the right way - as a good place to be, never as a 'sin bin'. For house training, a crate or den must be large enough for the puppy to have a bed with an edge to it and an area to go to the toilet. Buying a crate which will be large enough for him as an adult is a good idea - even if you don't intend to continue to use it indoors, it may be very useful in the car.

At night time or any time you need to leave him alone or need him safely contained, use the crate or den or an enclosed room like the kitchen or utility room. For the first few times you will need to 'explain' how to use the area to him.

- Place his bed at one end of the crate, den or room and place several layers of newspaper at the other (not too far away if using a whole room).
- Collect some of his urine from one of his earlier accidents, on a ball of cotton wool and seal it in a plastic bag.
- Get him used to being in the crate by simply laying a trail of treats into the crate and provide a nice stuffed kong or chew in there - don't close the door until he's really happy being in there.
- Then when you need to put him in his area, dab the urine onto the centre of the newspaper sheets, to show him where he should go.
- Most puppies will pick this up very quickly, already being conditioned not to 'go' in their bed, reducing the need for you to do this yucky task very often.
- If your puppy didn't receive the right training from his mother or had his instincts curbed by the conditions he was kept in, you will need to do further work to help him.

The more times he goes in the garden, and the fewer times he goes in his crate, the quicker he will become house trained, but there will always be times he must be confined for his own safety.

Car Travel

Please be aware of your puppy's toilet needs when travelling in the car. The best bet is to use a crate in the car, with the separate toilet area. If you can't fit a crate in the car, make the floor of the area the puppy travels in, waterproof. Puppies get very distressed if they are forced to go to the toilet in an area they consider to be their bed. Please note puppies must not be left unattended with the plastic backed puppy pads as they would be dangerous if chewed - stick to newspaper when you leave puppy alone.

You may find that your puppy doesn't like going to the toilet in a moving car. In this case, take him out to the toilet before you leave and stop regularly to take him out.

Progressing forwards

As time goes by, you should notice that the length between visits to the garden starts to lengthen. Observe your puppy carefully. If he goes to the door or even looks at it, make sure you open it for him, so he learns what he has to do to get the door open. It is possible to teach your dog to ring a bell or push a buzzer when he wants to go out- please ask if you would like to learn how to teach this.

You will also start to notice fewer accidents in the house. Continue praising and treating every time he performs outside. This way, as his body matures, he will become conditioned to go

outside. If you work hard and your dog matures quickly, he may be clean and dry by sixteen weeks. If not, don't worry, many dogs are six or seven months old, or even older when they become house trained. The good news is that by following this method, your dog will be house trained in a kind and effective way and in as short a time as possible for your particular dog, making for a much happier dog and home life.