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Helpful Housetraining Hints

By Donna Luzzo

Perhaps the best piece of advice ever given to a puppy owner is to get a newspaper, roll it up very tight, secure it with a rubber band and leave it on the coffee table.

Then when the puppy piddles in the house, chews up a slipper, or does anything it is not supposed to do, simply take the newspaper and bang it on the top of YOUR head very hard while repeating.....

"I should have been watching my puppy"

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Seriously though...

Housetraining can be frustrating. It can be further complicated if we don't let our dogs know when we're pleased, if we expect too much of them or if we send our dogs the wrong signals (they learn something other than what we intended).

These housetraining hints should be USED IN COMBINATION with one another.

Puppies - Puppies need to go potty often. Put your pup on a schedule. He should go out (at a minimum) upon waking -- including from naps, shortly after meals, after a play session, before being confined/crated, after being confined/crated and before retiring for the night. For youngsters, this will be about every two or three hours. As a rule of thumb, puppies can be expected to "hold it" one hour for every month old they are (up to 8 hours).

<u>Puppy's age</u>	<u>How long between potty breaks</u>
1 month	1 hour
2 months	2 hours
3 months	3 hours
4 months	4 hours
5 months	5 hours
6 months	6 hours
7 months	7 hours
8 months - adults	8 hours

***Take* the Dog Out** - While you are house training, take your dog out on lead to potty - don't just let him out into the yard. Walk him to the same area of the yard every time. (This way, you'll KNOW when and if he does his business, and you can reward him appropriately. Left to his own devices, he may get distracted by a squirrel or choose to

play instead, and may not relieve himself as was intended.) You should stand still, and let him have only the distance to the end of the lead when he is choosing "just the right place" to leave his deposit. If you walk with him, it could take hours for him to find "just the right place." Be sure to clean his potty area regularly.

Teach Him to Go ON COMMAND - Yes, this is possible - and it comes in handy! When you take him out to his potty area, repeat over and over whatever your command for going potty is (ie, "go potty," "Pee Pee," "Do Your Business," etc.) It should be like a non-stop sentence until he goes.

If you take him out on lead, give him the command to go potty and he takes longer than five - 10 minutes to urinate or defecate, bring him back into the house and put him in his crate. Wait 15 minutes and try again. Keep at it until he goes potty outside.

Reward and Praise Him - When your dog does his business outside, heap on the praise ("What a good dog!" "Good for You!" "Good Potty!") and reward him with a really good, yummy treat - EVERY SINGLE TIME! (The reward can also be some play time in the yard - for "ball happy" dogs, a couple of tosses of the tennis ball is a great reward too.) THIS IS ESSENTIAL!! He needs to know that when he goes potty OUTSIDE it makes you very happy! When he is done, spend a few minutes outside with him before going back in the house (in good weather, of course!). Dogs that love to be outdoors will sometimes learn to dawdle if they think they'll be rushed right back indoors after doing their business.

Teach Him to Give You a Signal: Dogs will not automatically "let you know" if they have to go potty. Or, they may try to let you know, but it won't be an obvious enough signal to you. So....create a signal. A popular method is to hang a bell at dog level on/next to the door you take the dog out. Each time you take him out to potty, use his paw to ring the bell, or entice him to bump it with his nose. Then say "lets go out" and take him (on lead) to do his business. If your dog speaks on command, you can try having him speak each time before you take him out the door.

Keep an Eye on Him Indoors - A dog that is not housetrained should not have "run of the house." You should be supervising him and his activities so that you can have positive results with housetraining. You can confine him or use confinement in several ways to help the cause.

- **The Crate:** This is a valuable training tool AND a great "comfort zone" for your dog. Once he is crate trained, the crate becomes your dog's den. Dogs generally will not soil where they sleep. If you take your dog out at a time when you are relatively certain he needs to potty (you'll get to know his schedule well) and he doesn't go, bring him back in the house and put him in his crate for about 15 minutes. Then go out again and give it another try. Keep it up until he does his business outside.

Use the crate, also, to keep him safe and your floors dry/clean when you aren't home. Make sure the crate is appropriately sized for your dog; make sure he has gone potty and is "on empty" before you crate him; and don't leave him crated for longer than he can "hold it."

IF HE SOILS HIS CRATE (assuming he was "on empty" before crating, and assuming he wasn't left for too long) he may have too much room in the crate or the bedding you've put in there may be too absorbent

- **Tethering:** If you want your dog to have some freedom, but need to keep an eye on him, try tethering him to yourself. You can use a 6 - 10 ft. lead (a piece of clothesline with a clip attached works well too). This will allow the dog some freedom to play or chew a bone, but will also keep him within view. Then if he starts to sniff around, or circle, you can run him outside.
- **Baby Gates:** These come in very handy! Use them to block access to certain rooms, and/or to keep your dog in the same room you are in. The idea, again, is to keep him in your sight. You can also use baby gates to confine your dog to one room when you aren't home (i.e. the kitchen).

If You Catch Him in the Act: Make a sound to interrupt (not reprimand) him ("EH-EH!!"), then scoop him up and run him outside. When he finishes his business out doors (even if it is just a drop) give big praise and a reward. Be sure to clean up the soiled area indoors with a pet odor neutralizer. Be cautious about yelling/scolding the dog while "in the act," and try not to use the word NO when you interrupt him. Rather than associating your anger with where he went, he may easily learn that going *while you can see him* is the "bad" thing. Dragging him over to it afterward and "rubbing his nose in it" is not likely to help either. Never, EVER, hit your dog for having an accident. It was probably your fault anyway (see "have patience" below).

If you come home to a soiled house: Well...it's probably your own fault. You either left the dog for longer than he could hold it, let him have too much freedom, or didn't make sure he was "on empty" before you left. Alternatively, he could be sick. DON'T reprimand the dog. He will not know why you are angry. Dogs think 'in the moment.' If he made the mess hours or even minutes ago, he's not thinking about it - so he won't associate your reprimand with his accident. Instead, he will come to fear your return, because he knows that when you come in the door he's going to be in trouble. (This is why dogs often "look guilty" when owners return; even if the dog has done nothing wrong.) Again, never, EVER, hit your dog for having an accident. It was probably your fault anyway (see "have patience" below).

If Your Housetrained Dog Starts Having Accidents: If you have a well housetrained dog that suddenly begins having accidents, collect a urine and fecal sample and take him to the vet. It's unusual for a trained, adult dog to have a housetraining setback. Oftentimes the accidents are the result illness or infection (i.e. bladder or kidney infections). The accidents may disappear as quickly as they started with medical attention. If there isn't a medical problem, get in touch with your trainer to discuss other possible causes for the setback. Begin re-training using all of the steps used when you first trained the dog.

Litter Pan Training: If you own a small dog, you may want to try litter pan training. In effect, you will create an indoor place where it is OK for your dog to urinate/defecate. It may be the "primary" place they go (handy if you live in a high rise, or can't easily take your

dog out for frequent "potty" trips), or it can be the "emergency" potty (helpful if you have to be away from home for longer than expected).

Start by paper training. At first, spread out newspaper in the area where you will keep your litter pan. Gradually reduce the papered area as your pup/dog learns. Follow the same directions as for outdoor training, but bring him to the newspapers instead. Once he's going on the paper, put it into your "pan." A crate pan works really well for this (easily ordered from pet supply catalogs). You might also be able to find a dog litter box - it's much like a cat litter box, but with a cut-out area in front to make entry and exit easy for the dog.

Marking Territory: Intact male and female dogs will both urinate to mark their territory. This is a natural instinct, but training can help eliminate the behavior. Neutered/spayed pets may mark territory...but not as commonly or frequently as intact dogs. So, the first step in alleviating marking behavior is to have your pet spayed or neutered. The urge to mark will not disappear overnight, but will certainly diminish over time.

If you have a "marker" be sure to follow the steps for confining, so you can prevent the action. If your dog does mark an area of your home, clean it thoroughly with a neutralizer to get rid of all odor.

If you've got a male dog that loves to lift his leg, try using a Belly Band on him. This simple tool, made of cloth, is worn around his midsection and covers his penis (looks like a cummerbund). It is designed to keep urine off of your furniture walls and carpets. It can also work as a deterrent, because your dog will not like feeling the wet band against his skin. Use the belly band in conjunction with all the other housetraining tips. When you see him lift, treat it like "catching him in the act," described above.

Have Patience! This is critical. Some dogs will learn quickly - others take a bit longer. If you have children, keep in mind how long it took you to potty train them! Spending several weeks or even months to get your dog or pup 100% reliable on housetraining will seem like a "cake walk" if you've raised children! Don't expect too much too soon. If your dog or pup has an accident, ask yourself what YOU did wrong before you get angry at the dog. Did you give him too much freedom? Forget to take him out after a meal? Let him outside without supervising? Consistency, commitment and positive reinforcement on your part are essential. Your dog will be happy to learn from you, and even happier to know he has pleased you.