



## House Training

Whether you've got a new puppy or have taken on a rescue dog, house training is normally top of the agenda for the first few weeks of living with your new pal. It can be a stressful time, with stained carpets, frayed tempers and frustration all round. So – if this is your struggle right now, put your pup where you can see him, make a cup of tea, and take 10 minutes to read this! Although this advice is aimed at new puppies, aged 8 weeks, the same advice can be adapted to any dog, although the timings might be longer with an older dog, and you might get more sleep...!

### **Encouragement**

Dogs and puppies do what works for them. If they have never needed to pee & poo outside before, they won't suddenly understand why they can't do it on your nice cream carpet in the warm and dry. So, when he/ she does go in the right place – outside, on a training mat, on the newspaper, on a walk - make it a Big Deal! Praise him enthusiastically – use high squeaky excited voices, give him his favourite tasty treat, have a game of tug, whatever it is that your pup enjoys the most. Make it worth his while to change his habits to suit you – if he gets 'paid' in treats to pee in the garden then he is more likely to do it again.

A dog will instinctively not want to soil his bed. If you crate your dog, he will be distressed if he can't get out to relieve himself and will, as a last resort go in his bed. He will find this upsetting and make him less likely to accept being crated. A puppy cannot hold his bladder for more than an hour or two. Give him access to an area away from his bed, that he can use if you leave him. You could use a bigger crate, or put the crate inside a puppy pen, or section off part of the room. Put the newspaper or pad you want him go on as far away from the sleeping and eating areas as you can.

In time the pup will get to see the whole house as his 'bed' and will not want to soil inside unless it's an absolute emergency. This takes time but normally, with careful and consistent training, can be achieved by 5 months of age, if not before. Older dogs tend to pick it up quicker as they have greater bladder control, but seem to be more likely to have occasional 'accidents' for longer.

### **Provide Enough Opportunities to get it right...**

With a puppy, it's all in the timing. Puppies will probably need to go straight after eating, drinking, waking up or after a lively play session. In the first few weeks, watch him like a hawk! Take him outside straight after all of these activities and give him a few minutes to sniff about and choose a place. If he goes – have a party! Loads of praise! If he doesn't, then wait another couple of minutes and take him back in but keep watching! Some puppies will wait until they are back inside before they go, so if he goes to squat, make a loud squeaky noise to distract him (but no shouting – something like 'whoops!' or 'uh oh!' is perfect), scoop him up gently – no harsh or too sudden movements - and take him straight outside where, hopefully, he will finish what he started.

If you like a routine, take him outside every hour on the hour, as well as all the other times mentioned above – this helps to fix it in your head that you need to be watching him – but note that you don't need to wake him up if he is sleeping in the day!

With enough chances to get it right, and sufficient praise and rewards to make it seem a good idea to repeat the behaviour, he will quickly learn. Honest 😊

#### **How to deal with mistakes:**

If he goes where he shouldn't, and you don't have time to stop him with a 'whoops!' and take him out, then ignore what's happened, take him outside in case there is more to come, and then clean up thoroughly using a cleaner designed to get rid of pet odours effectively. Don't shout, don't tell him off, don't smack him or rub his nose in it, or show you are in any way annoyed. Puppies are very quick to form fear responses and any of these reactions may cause your puppy to be scared of going to the loo in front of you anywhere, or just make him plain scared of you, or of your hands or feet if, heaven forbid, you feel the need to hit or kick out. This sort of response can quickly lead to the dog defending itself if it senses it might happen again, leading to growling, aggressive behaviours and snapping at feet and hands. It definitely will not progress your house training, unless what you want is a dog that's terrified to poo and pee where you can see it, and you also like to clean up mess from behind your sofa every day....

#### **What to do at night:**

If your puppy is sleeping away from you, and you don't want to get up in the night, prepare him a space where he can go that's not in his sleeping quarters (see above). Don't expect him to hold it in all night for some time though – he will learn that it's ok to go when he wants, albeit on the paper etc. and will also think this if these resources are around in the day. Be prepared for a big mess in the morning!

Ideally, (and this definitely makes the whole process quicker), be prepared to get up in the night and let him out. Put his bed/ crate somewhere you can hear him if he wakes. He will wake up when he needs to go and start snuffling about, or, if in a crate, will whine or bark. Go to him, but keep it dark, don't talk, don't make a fuss, just take him outside and wait for him to go. As soon as he does, praise him really well (but calmly!) bring him back in and put him back to bed.

If you are a heavy sleeper, set an alarm for every two hours and take him out then.

Either way - as he gets older he will be better able to control himself and you will get a better idea of how long he can go before he wakes up. Ideally, you will be able to start to pre-empt when he needs to go, and using this info you can start to shift his wake up times. For example, if he is waking every three hours, set your alarm for 2 hours 45 mins, wake him up and take him out. Go back to bed and repeat. Do this for 3 days. The pup should learn that you will come and let him out before he needs to ask and will tend to wait for you to take him. Then, set your alarm for 3 hours and repeat for 3 more days. Then extend the time of each alarm in 15 to 30 minute chunks until he is going all night and hasn't really noticed. This can generally be achieved in about 3 weeks. It's hellish on your sleep patterns, but the pup will learn to not soil in the house much quicker and your carpets will be cleaner... It helps to share this task with someone else, but make sure they do EXACTLY what you tell them! Consistency is key!

### **Asking to go out:**

Your puppy will probably take a while to get the hang of how to ask you to open the door for him. He may know he needs to go, and that he should be going outside, but he is sitting looking at the door and nothing is happening. Even when they are clean normally it can be easy to forget this so be watchful – if the pup disappears check he isn't sitting with his legs crossed at the back door...

### **Top Tips**

- If you are leaving the pup in a pen or large crate, and you want him to generally wee etc on grass, consider using a piece of turf for him to go on in his pen, which can be replaced every couple of days. It will get him used to the habit of going outside if he can associate grass with weeing regularly.
- Take up rugs and unfitted carpets until you are confident in your puppy's abilities.
- Puppy pads are great, but are tempting for the pup to rip up and generally destroy, as is newspaper. Only use if you absolutely have to – i.e you cannot watch when the puppy needs to go. If you are at home with the dog, pick up the pads and take the dog out instead – it will speed things up!
- If you are using pads etc, gradually decrease the area covered, and then move that area closer to the back door as the pup gets used to it – this will ease the transition to going outside and give you less mess to clear up.
- Your pup should have access to water at night, but he doesn't need loads. Likewise, if you put him to bed with a chew toy stuffed with food, he is more likely to need to poo in the night. So go easy on the amounts you give your puppy before bed.
- Set an alarm on your phone to remind you every hour to take him outside

Above all, be patient and kind. The puppy really wants to please you so show him what is right by really rewarding the good things and totally ignoring the mistakes. If you follow this advice, you will definitely get there! And don't forget – it will quickly pass!

If you are struggling do give us a call – we might just be able to help ☺