

## How to Housetrain

### **A veterinarian explains the best way to housetrain your dog.**

*Leslie Sinclair, DVM*

Q. How do I housetrain my dog?

Leslie Sinclair, DVM says: Housetraining is perhaps the most important aspect of managing your dogs behavior and often the most difficult. Too often, not housetrained is the reason a dog is relinquished to an animal shelter or otherwise loses his home. While many dogs seem to be magically housetrained from the get-go, others have a harder time with the concept. Whether you are house-training a new puppy or a recently adopted adult dog, the keys to success are consistency and patience. Be prepared to spend from a few days to a few weeks housetraining a new dog, and realize that no matter how well you do your job, there will be accidents for you to clean up. To start, put your puppy or dog on a regular feeding schedule. Feed puppies three to four times a day and adult dogs twice daily. Never restrict your dogs food or water intake in an effort to control urination and defecation.

Decide where you want your dog to eliminate. Ideally, choose an outside area not too far from the door. Put your puppy or dog on a leash and take him there when he first wakes up, just after he eats, and after a play session. Praise him lavishly when he eliminates and give him a small food treat. Avoid playing outdoors until he has eliminated, otherwise he will become more interested in playing than in eliminating and will wait until he's returned indoors.

When your puppy or dog has an accident in the house, don't punish him. If you find the mess after the fact, its too late for him to understand the connection between the mess and your punishment. A dog has long-term memory challenges and likely won't remember what he did three seconds ago. A dog who acts like he knows what he did was wrong is only reacting to your threatening tone or posture. Don't rub his nose in the mess; he'll only learn to fear you. Instead, take him outside in case he's not done, and then put him somewhere out of sight while you clean up, so he won't sense your frustration. If you catch your dog in the act of eliminating indoors, get his attention with a nonthreatening noise (such as a hand clap) and take him to his outside place in a nonthreatening manner; praise him lavishly if he finishes his elimination there.

Between trips outside, keep your dog in sight or confine him in a crate where there is only enough room for his bed and food/water dishes. Take him out every two hours or so and any time you see him sniffing around or circling as if he needs to go.

What about paper-training or using doggy litter? Although you should take your new dog or puppy out every few hours during his housetraining period, many people find this is not always possible. Puppies younger than nine months and dogs who are not yet housetrained cannot be expected to hold it for eight hours while you are away at work. Older dogs and dogs with urinary bladder problems may also have trouble waiting this length of time to relieve themselves. Hiring a professional dog walker or depending on a trusted adult friend or neighbor to take your dog out in your absence is one solution; paper-training or using doggy litter is another. If you live in a high-rise, you may want to teach your dog to eliminate indoors in a designated area with paper or litter.