

## HOUSEBREAKING

Decide if you are going to crate-train your new puppy (see separate section). Some pups immediately feel more secure when left alone in a crate with blankets, toys, food, water, and, if large enough, an area of paper for urination and defecation. If the crate is small, an older puppy will be unlikely to soil it; however, no puppy can be expected to last 8-10 hours without urinating and defecating. During the day, a puppy can hold its urine about as long in hours as his age in months plus one (eg: a 3-month old puppy can hold it about 4 hours).

If you aren't going to crate your puppy, confine it to one area (kitchen, den, sun porch) at first. This gives the dog a greater sense of security when you're not home, and minimizes damage. Leave a radio and light on for the pup. Expand the areas to which it has access over a period of weeks. If you are going to be gone for more than 2-3 hours the puppy will have to urinate or defecate, so you'll have to train him to a litter box or newspaper.

Make sure the room is puppy-proof; no cupboards with chemicals or toxic substances; no strings, ropes, slippers, magazines or mail the dog can shred or ingest. The dog should have a blanket, water, toys and a biscuit or two. Be careful about confining puppies in bathrooms, where they have been known to drown in toilets, or in kitchens, if they can reach and turn on the stove accidentally.

Puppies develop substrate preferences for urination and defecation. This means that if you teach a dog to urinate on a newspaper, the pup will learn to seek out that substrate. This can pose a problem if you haven't finished the *Times* and place the unread section on the floor. Although it is tougher to teach a puppy to go outside to urinate and defecate after it has learned to use newspaper, it is not impossible. It is preferable to teach the dog to go outside at the outset, but this may not fit into your schedule. So, the following are your options:

Every two hours during the day, take the puppy outside. Puppies have high metabolisms and small bladders. Let it sniff around; don't just pull it to walk. Every time the pup squats, praise it. When the dog is finished, tell it it's brilliant. Regardless, make sure you take the dog out 30-45 minutes after each time it eats. That's about the length of time it takes to stimulate the puppy's GI tract. Again, praise the dog as it is squatting and immediately after it has finished.

If you must train the pup to paper or a litter box, put it in one place, preferably close to a door. Take the puppy to the paper frequently and praise it if it squats. You may want to put heavy gauge plastic under the newspaper to protect the underlying floor in case the pup misses or if the urine soaks through the paper. Getting the puppy outdoors still requires you to be home for a while. While the dog is being trained to paper, you still

have to take it out 4 times a day, again 30-45 minutes after each meal. Praise it during, and immediately after, the squat.

To wean the pup from paper, spy on it during a weekend and as it begins to go to or squat on the paper, rush it outside and wait for it to urinate or defecate. This also stops the dog from being fearful outside. Praise it in excess. This will slow the process of getting the puppy to develop an outdoor substrate preference, but if you work it may be your only option. Some people with small dogs elect to have the dog permanently trained to paper or a litter box. That's easier to handle for small dogs and fine if it works for you, but if you don't want this, you will need to take the time to go through the amount of work described here.

Punishment has almost no role in housebreaking a dog. Animals and people make associations between acts and consequences; this is how we learn. Coming home to find a puddle of urine on the rug or the dog cringing does not mean that the dog knows it erred. What it probably means is that this has happened before – you've come home, grabbed the dog, dragged it to the urine, and whacked it. The dog has made an association; you coming home and it being whacked, but it's the wrong association (or at least, the one you probably did not intend to deliver). In fact, if you've punished the pup, it might cringe when you come home even if it hasn't urinated on the rug, but you don't notice.

You must couple the correction exactly with the action that needs correcting. If you see the puppy start to squat (preferably) or in the act of urinating/defecating on the rug, scare it using a sharp "no" coupled with a loud noise (clapping your hands, banging a pot, blasting a foghorn) to startle the pup. Then take the pup outside, praising it when it urinates or defecates on an appropriate substrate. Psychologists have shown that we learn best and most quickly if surprised, so startling the dog with an unpleasant stimulus while it is in the act is the best way to teach it to associate unpleasant actions with eliminating in the wrong place.

You also have to clean the soiled areas well. Dogs have much more acute senses of smell than you do. Cleaning with ammonia will only cause the puppy to return to the area since ammonia is the breakdown product of urine. Use an enzymatic product like Nature's Miracle.