

Puppy Toilet Training

The most effective way to toilet train a new puppy involves patience, consistency, repetition, timing, and neutral correction. *Patience* is essential for nurturing the physical and emotional development of your dog. Do not compare your puppy's progress with other dogs you have known or heard about, as this process is not a competition. Every dog is an individual who will progress at his own rate.

Young pups do not have the physical bladder/bowel control that older dogs do, but at about eight weeks of age you can start teaching your pup what you want. Later, when his ability to control himself physically has developed, you will have already introduced the words required to guide him. Be *consistent* in your methods so your puppy can predict your response and get used to the routine.

Your puppy's learning curve will accelerate as you persist, so do not be discouraged if he seems to start slowly at first. The longer it takes, the more reliable the results will be, so be patient. *Repetition* is an important factor in forming the habits that you desire from your dog. Simply do the same thing over and over in the same way and your dog will begin to anticipate and accommodate you.

Timing is key in teaching your dog what you want. Your response to an incorrect behaviour must be at the very instant the behaviour occurs. A response that is delivered even minutes afterward will serve only to confuse the dog, as he lacks the intellectual capacity to connect the delayed response to the original action. This is especially true for puppies.

Finally, I cannot emphasize enough the importance of *neutral corrections* for any unwanted behaviour. Your neutral correction can simply be the word "No" in a matter-of-fact tone-no anger or shaming or shouting. Imagine someone has just asked if it is raining outside: Say "No" in a clear, normal tone of voice. You want your correction word to convey the message to your dog without creating an anxiety or fear reaction. a

During the day, contain your puppy in a room with a smooth-surfaced floor (no carpets) and spread newspaper all over the floor. Each day, remove a few papers from the floor, starting with the papers furthest away from the door. As you progress, you can place papers outdoors where you eventually want your pup to go. If you are present as your pup goes pee or pooh, verbally praise him ("Good pee!" "Good pooh!"). Pay attention to your pup's natural time to go. You will learn to anticipate his needs. Then simply take him outside where you want him to go, and as soon as he does, verbally praise him and give him a cuddle.

Keep in mind that new pups will usually need to pee about every two hours and move their bowels as many times as they are fed. The timing of the latter will vary until he matures. As you walk your pup in the yard or around the block, watch for him to do his business and as soon as he does, verbally praise him and give him a cuddle.

Some people have been successful in teaching their dog to eliminate in one particular spot outside. This involves leading him to that spot on leash and calmly standing there until the job is

done. You can use a verbal cue like "Rover, pee!" or "Rover, pooh!" When he completes the task, praise him. At night, you can contain your pup in a crate where he is unlikely to eliminate as long as you have given him the opportunity to do his business before he goes to bed. Then let him out first thing in the morning before you put the kettle on! If he does make a mistake in his crate, *do not scold* ; just take him outside and start the process all over again. Scolding a new pup for making a mistake is as unproductive and damaging as scolding a human child for messing his diaper. And **do not** rub your pup's nose in his foeces or urine and expect anything other than a possible bacterial infection! **Scolding and humiliation will cause fear and anxiety and create unpredictable, fear-based toilet habits.**

I do not recommend the use of food to reward a dog for housetraining or any other basic task, as the dog will eventually teach *you* that he won't perform unless a cookie is involved. You will get more reliable and longer- term results by engaging your dog's brain (internal motivation) rather than his stomach (external motivation). *I have never met a dog I couldn't train without food, only people who didn't know how* . In my forty year career in the behavioural sciences, I have learned that the best positive reinforcement for dogs (and our human children) is verbal praise and a cuddle.

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