

# HOUSEBREAKING

This is one of the most important training efforts you'll ever make – but it doesn't have to be difficult. Behaviorists recommended a five step approach:

## 1. Establish a routine.

The first thing every morning and the last thing every night, take your puppy outside. Feel him at the same time every day and take him outside as soon after a meal as possible – always within fifteen minutes. During housebreaking when you're with your puppy, take him out every hour. While fresh drinking water should be available at all times, you may want to time a very young puppy's drinks to just prior to his scheduled hourly potty break.

## 2. Until he is trained keep a constant eye on your puppy.

During housebreaking, the only time your puppy should have the run of the house is when you are there to watch him. This accomplishes two things: you'll teach your puppy who's in charge and you'll know where he is at all times. It may sound difficult, but remember it's only for a short period of time. By the time he is four to five months old, he'll have earned more freedom – and you'll have established who's the leader in his pack!



## 3. Crate-train your puppy.

Remember puppies instinctively want to keep their sleeping space clean. Make the crate a happy place for your puppy. Encourage him to go into the crate by tossing a toy or kibble of puppy food inside while commanding, "Crate" or "Kennel." Once inside, praise him and close the door. After a moment, let your puppy back out of the crate. Repeat the exercise, gradually extending his time inside.

Use the crate as a bed and as a safe place for your puppy whenever you're gone or cannot watch him. Try not to make a big deal out of opening the door to let him out – you want your puppy to know that praise follows the command to go inside the crate, not the coming out. When taking your puppy out of his crate during the first few weeks of the housebreaking period, put a leash on him and walk to his designated potty place as quickly as possible. This will lessen the chance of an accident.

As a general rule, your puppy can safely be left in his crate the number of hours that equal his age in months plus one. That would mean a two month old puppy should be left no more than three hours in his crate without a potty break. When you do let him out of his crate, make sure you give plenty of time and attention. The more time he spends interacting with you, the quicker your puppy will learn and earn more freedom.

#### 4. Designate a potty area.

Let your puppy know where he should go potty by taking him to a designated potty place. Do this by consistently taking him to the same spot and commanding "Go potty." When he does have an accident, wipe it up and put the rag or paper towel at the designated potty place. The scent will help clue him in to your command. When he does potty in the proper place, reward your puppy with lavish praise and lots of petting. Only after he has eliminated should your puppy be allowed to play outside. He has to learn that it's business first!

#### 5. Correct your puppy's mistakes only when you catch him in the act.

With a firm "No" pick up your puppy and take him to the designated potty area. A puppy is a baby and you must expect some accidents. It's not his 'fault.' Be patient. Clean up the area with an odor neutralizer to prevent further soiling in that place.

Never punish your puppy by yelling, screaming, hitting (with your hand or newspaper), or banishing him to his crate. If you come upon accident later, clean it up without comment. Your puppy simply will not understand the connection between your aggression and his mistake after the fact. Once again, remember: the only thing you teach your dog by aggression is how to be aggressive.

## **A Note For Puppy Parents Who Work Outside the Home:**

Leaving a new puppy all day can be stressful for you and your puppy – and expecting a very young puppy to go all day without a potty break is unrealistic. If you cannot come home midday see if you can find a neighbor who will walk your puppy at noon. Leave a radio or television on while you're gone so your puppy can have the comfort of a human voice. Also, try not to make departures upsetting. Establish your routine for leaving, don't induce trauma by making farewells lengthy and fussy. When you are home, try to spend as much time as possible interacting with your puppy, providing all the exercise and attention he's missed while you were away. And please don't return your puppy to his crate too quickly after you've been away for a long time – he needs to be with you!

