



POTTY TRAINING

By Lynne Stephens

“Could you please potty train my dog? “

“I put him outside for ages. He just plays around and then comes in the house and goes just inside the door!”

Sound familiar?

These experiences will not be new to many of you who have recently introduced a new young puppy into your home.

Unfortunately, the real answer to this question is “No.”

Potty training is something you really need to do yourself with your puppy, unless you are prepared to pay your trainer to move into your home with you for the next few months – a very expensive undertaking!

It is also something that you need to consider very carefully before even making the commitment to taking home and caring for your new puppy.

There are many popular misconceptions surrounding the whole area of potty training dogs. So, let us look at some facts.

First, the myths.

- Let's face it; he's just a **dirty** puppy.
- He **knows** he should go outside the house.
- He waits for me to go out and then goes just to **spite** me.
- He knows he has done wrong - he looks so **guilty** when I get home.
- My puppy is an un-neutered male, so I should **expect** him to use my home as a bathroom.
- Potty training is very **difficult**.

And now for the truths.

- A puppy's instinct is to be **clean**. He will not want to soil his own bed or living quarters.
- He has **no idea** about human rules regarding the potty. Carpet is just as good as grass as far as he's concerned.
- Dogs have **no concept of spite**.
- Your puppy does not look guilty. He looks **afraid** when you get home. He has learned that you often get very angry with him on these occasions!
- Un-neutered males **do not** have to use your home as a bathroom.
- Potty training is very **simple** - BUT IT IS NOT EASY!!



SO HOW DO I BEGIN?

First, make sure you are doing the right thing. Before you take home your cute little bundle of fluff, consider the good and bad news below. If you are prepared to put in a lot of ground work at the very beginning, then go ahead. You will be well rewarded. If not, then you may wish to reconsider your decision to have a puppy at all! You may even decide, after looking honestly at your workload and lifestyle, that adopting a slightly older rescue dog who is already potty trained, is a better option for you and your dog. ***(Before embarking on this route, however, try to find out as much as you can about your rescue dog's background and parentage before taking him home)***

The bad news

- You will have to ***work very hard*** with a young puppy to help him to understand where to relieve himself
- You will have to watch your puppy ***at all times*** when he is loose in your house.
- You will need to ***stand outside*** with your puppy in rain, wind, snow, extreme heat, mosquitoes
- You will need to be ***very patient***.

The good news

- Puppies, treated with kindness and patience ***respond readily to training***.
- You will begin to see your hard ***work paying off very quickly*** (in just a few months) if you are fair and consistent with your training.
- Time spent now, learning to communicate effectively with your puppy will help build up the ***strong bond*** that will form your future relationship with him.

USE THESE SPECIAL TIMES TO HELP YOU WITH YOUR TRAINING.

Young puppies always need to go to the bathroom at these three times

- When they wake up.
- After they have been playing
- After food or drink.

At these times, you should always take your puppy outside to relieve himself. If he goes immediately, praise him well and then go straight back inside the house.

Once inside, make sure you continue to be vigilant. No young puppy should be left to explore your home without supervision. In about 20 – 30 minutes if he has been actively playing and exploring, he will probably want to go out



again! Remember that your puppy, like any young animal (humans included) has a fairly small bladder and will need to go to the bathroom often.

Watch for signs that your puppy “wants to go.” These may include circling, looking uncomfortable, sniffing for the right spot etc.

At first these signs might be difficult to spot, but if you really watch your puppy carefully at all times when he is loose both inside and outside your house, you will soon learn to recognize the tell-tale signs. As soon as you spot these signs, take your puppy outside to the area you would like him to use as his bathroom and wait.

Don't be discouraged by the fact that he may then become distracted by other things outside, such as leaves blowing around the yard. Just keep watching and waiting patiently and you will eventually be rewarded as your puppy will remember that he needed to go to the bathroom.

As soon as he begins to go, give him a word that he will later associate with the action. (I use “Hurry up” for my own dogs), praise him well, maybe offering a small tidbit of food, and take him straight back inside.

Then you will have (time) to play and enjoy your puppy without fear of immediate accidents. When you have finished playing, (remember after play is a time that most puppies will want to use the bathroom) take him outside again and repeat the above. If you then need to get on with some chores around the house, put your puppy in his crate so that he can rest and you can be reassured that there will be no puddles to clear up when you are done.

When you let your puppy out of the crate again, remember you must take him out once more to relieve himself. Yes, this really does seem to be all you do with a youngster for the first couple of months. Just think of the number of feeds and diaper changes that young human babies need. ***Did I mention that this was going to be hard work?*** However, nowhere near as hard as cleaning up after your puppy many times a day will be if you do not put in the training time now.

The whole idea of this regime is to show your puppy exactly where you would like him to go and relieve himself and how pleased you are when he does. You are managing the situations so that he does not regularly practice going in an inappropriate place. Remember, all puppies like to be clean and once a regular spot becomes established, your puppy will give even clearer signs that he wants to go to that special place when he needs to go. Each time your puppy is positively reinforced for going to the bathroom in the correct place, will make it more likely that he is going to want to use that place again.



However, each time he goes in the “wrong” place, he will be establishing a habit that you will have difficulty in trying to break later” When a puppy is learning - he doesn't understand that going inside is "wrong" and outside is "right." He learns what type of surface is appropriate to go on. He learns - it's good to go on grass or dirt and it's important that he does not learn he can go on carpet or hardwood floors - which means watching him and managing the situation so that he isn't allowed to have accidents on these surfaces. Every time he relieves himself outside imagine taking a step forward - but every time he goes inside on the inappropriate surfaces - imagine two - maybe three - steps backward.” **It is your job to show him what you would like him to do before unwanted habits are formed.**

Management really is the key in potty training and indeed many other aspects of training your dog.

What do I do if my puppy has an accident in the house?

If it has already happened, there is nothing useful you can do, except ignore it, remind yourself to be more diligent next time and clean up.

Remember, if your puppy is unattended in the house, he should be in a crate or safe enclosed area.

If you catch your puppy in the act of relieving himself on your best rug, you may be able to stop the behavior – perhaps with an “eh eh” or other noise loud enough to interrupt him. Remember, this noise is **not meant as a punishment**, but just **an interruption** which will allow you time to take your puppy outside to the appropriate place. Once again, you will then have to be patient as your puppy will probably have forgotten what he was about to do and will still be recovering from being startled in the house. Be assured, your patience will be rewarded in the end.

It is important to realize that, if you punish your puppy for going in the house, you will actually make the job of housetraining even harder. This is because when you punish him he won't actually understand that he's being punished for urinating in the house. What he is more likely to learn is that relieving himself when you are around can be really scary. So then you will have a puppy that will try to make sure he goes when you are not around. This may mean that he will try to go in the house when you can't see him or, even more frustrating, when you take him outside to go, he will either take a very long time or not go at all, thinking that he is wrong to go in your presence.

If you have remembered to always use a word such as “Hurry up” when your puppy has relieved himself outside, you will soon find that, if you use this word when you take him out, it will remind him why he is there and you will



be well on the way to training him to relieve himself on command. This can be especially useful when, as a grown dog, you would like him to be quick so that you can get in out of the rain or the cold or simply make sure you are not late for work.

What if I have to leave my puppy for longer than usual and he cannot wait to relieve himself outside?

First, it is important to re-iterate that, before you undertake the huge responsibility that is owning and bringing up a young puppy, you must really examine your lifestyle to make sure that you have both the time and resources to do so. This said, however, there will be times when you may have to leave your youngster for a longer than usual time.

In these cases, once again management is the key.

Make sure that whenever you leave your puppy unattended he is safely in his crate or set him up a special "dog-proof" area, maybe with an exercise pen (these can be purchased at most pet stores).

Make sure he has plenty of indestructible chew toys or safe bones to keep him occupied in his special area. Also leave him with water and, at the far end of the pen, away from his bed or crate, place a litter box with a piece of sod inside. This will encourage him to use an appropriate place for his bathroom that is very similar to the outside that you are training him to use when you are able to be with him.

The use of this system, however, is not an alternative to the steps I have described above, which are the only way of ensuring a house broken and happy puppy and owner in the shortest possible time.

In conclusion then, potty training your puppy is a simple, repetitive process that is going to be very hard work for a period of a few months. The more diligent and observant you can be in those months, the more quickly, easily and reliably your puppy will be trained.

If you are not sure that you can commit this amount of time and energy to house training a new puppy, you may decide that owning a dog is not for you or that you would prefer to adopt an older pet where this training has been done already.

Whatever you decide, I wish you a long and happy and clean relationship with the newest member of your family.

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