

Hints for Housebreaking

DO:

- DO start with a schedule. Dogs are creatures of habit, so feed your puppy at the same time each day and allow him to go out after playing, eating and sleeping. Be patient and don't rush him. When he performs, praise him.
- DO feed a high-quality puppy chow, preferably a specialty food purchased from a pet supply store. Avoid foods containing dyes, as these concentrate in the stool and can leave a permanent stain on your carpet.
- DO feed your puppy at least three times daily until four months of age and twice daily thereafter.
- DO confine the puppy in a crate or enclosed area when you can't supervise him. A puppy will not normally mess in his den area. Restrict his time outside the area of confinement. The only "safe" time to allow him to move about freely is within the first half hour or so of elimination. Housebreaking is easier when you avoid accidents.
- The crate should be just large enough for the puppy. If it is too large, he may use one end of it for his bathroom.
- DO use the "umbilical cord." That is, leash the puppy to you as you go about your day. Allow him access to his bathroom area according to the schedule you have set up. Because he is confined by the leash, he is unlikely to mess, and at the same time, his bond to you is strengthened by your continuous presence.
- DO follow the principle of "earning rooms." Once the puppy is four months old, you can try leaving him unsupervised in one room of the house for various periods of time. After seven consecutive days without an accident, allow him access to one more room. Again, after another seven consecutive days have been accident-free, allow him access to a third room, and so on until he has the run of the whole house. But if he has an accident at any one stage, return to the previous stage and continue your program from there.

- DO take up water and food at least two hours before bedtime.

- DO use a 50-50 vinegar and water solution to deodorize any areas the puppy has wrongly used.

DON'T:

- DON'T supplement the puppy's diet unless specifically instructed to by your veterinarian.

- DON'T paper-train first and then expect your puppy to know to go outside. You will have to retrain him to use a new area. The principles are the same for paper-training or outside housebreaking.

- DON'T expect your puppy to have good bladder control before he is four months old. Your puppy will tell you how many times a day he needs to go out.

- DON'T shout at, hit or otherwise abuse your puppy for having accidents. You will frighten him, thus interfering with his ability to learn what you want him to learn. If you find a mess, take him to it and in a low tone of voice, tell him how displeased you are as you point to the mess. Then take him to where he should have gone.

- DON'T rub his nose in his mess. This is not training; it is abuse, and it's only "value" is in relieving your frustration. As well, this practice can result in a stool eating dog.

- DON'T put the accident in a bag and tie it around the puppy's neck. He has no way of knowing what you mean to convey to him. No canine can possibly comprehend "I'm mad at you and this is how I'm going to get my revenge," which is what you're really thinking, isn't it?

- DON'T buy a puppy that has been raised in a puppy mill or other unclean environment. (Most pet shop puppies come from puppy mills.) They will be accustomed to being filthy and will be difficult to teach to be clean.