

# **CEDAR WAY VETERINARY CLINIC, Ltd.**

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Puppies develop substrate preferences for urination and defecation. This means, for example, if an animal is taught to urinate on newspaper, it will learn to seek out that substrate. Although it's tougher to teach a puppy to go outside to eliminate after it has learned to use newspaper, it's not impossible. Of course, it's preferable to teach the dog to go outside at the outset, but this may not meet the client's schedule.

Specific instructions like those that follow are helpful in encouraging clients to humanely housetrain their dogs. \* Housetraining a dog is not complex, but people don't have an intuitive sense of puppy metabolisms and bladder size. This is one example where the technical and biological information veterinary professionals have to share can be priceless.

## **12 tips to train a puppy to urinate and defecate outside**

- 1.** Every one to two hours, take the puppy outside. Puppies have high metabolisms—meaning they make a lot of urine quickly—and they have small bladders, which means they can't store all of that urine for long. A Labrador retriever puppy's full bladder is about the size of a lemon; a Yorkshire terrier puppy's bladder is the size of a small apricot or large grape.
- 2.** When the puppy is out, let it sniff a bit. Don't just pull it away from what it's sniffing and keep walking. Sniffing is an important part of the elimination sequence in dogs.
- 3.** If the puppy is just rampantly plowing ahead sniffing, consider stopping and walking quickly back and forth. This movement simulates normal dog elimination precursor behavior. The dog eventually will squat. Pay attention and praise it.
- 4.** Use a fixed-length short lead so you can quickly encourage your puppy and respond to its cues. You can give the dog a small treat as it squats on a substrate you both like (e.g., grass). A reward may help encourage the association between squatting on that substrate and good experiences. Urinating or defecating is physiologically self-rewarding; you're rewarding the behavior exhibited in the location chosen.
- 5.** Regardless of the frequency of your other walks, take the dog out 15 to 45 minutes after each time it eats. This is the time range for eating to stimulate intestines to move feces. Do this after all meals, as well as biscuits and rawhides, both of which will stimulate elimination.
- 6.** Watch for behaviors (e.g., pacing, whining, circling, sudden stopping of another behavior) that tell you the dog may be ready to eliminate, and intercept the dog. If you pick up the puppy and it starts to leak, or the act of picking up the dog starts the leak, get a cloth and clamp it to the puppy's genitals. This will help to stimulate the dog to associate inhibition of elimination with those muscle groups. Again, praise the dog as it's squatting and immediately after it's finished. Don't punish leaks.
- 7.** Take the puppy out immediately after any play and naps or if it awakens at night.
- 8.** Prepare for the first walk of the day by having your street clothes on before you approach a crated puppy. Puppies that have waited through the night cannot wait long once you're awake.

- 9.** Watch the puppy in between walks—puppies often get caught short, especially if they encounter and play with a water dish, or they become super focused or distracted. Any puppy that's moving around and suddenly stops needs to eliminate. You can make monitoring easier by putting a bell on the dog's collar. Any time the puppy's bell stops, take the dog outside immediately. Be sure to use a break-away/quick-release collar that comes undone if the dog hangs it on anything.
- 10.** If you have an older dog that's housetrained, take it with you when you take the puppy out. Dogs learn extremely well by observing, and this may speed the process.
- 11.** Dogs are generally faster to houstrain for defecation than urination. This may be due, in part, to the fact that puppies urinate more frequently than they defecate. For some clueless dogs, it can help to either take a urine-soaked sponge or a piece of feces to the area you'd prefer the puppy use. This may help it learn to associate the scent pattern with the area but cannot be used in the absence of the other steps noted above.
- 12.** Don't forget to clean up feces. This allows dogs to be recognized as socially acceptable members of the community and may reduce transmission of parasites.

## 6 additional tips to train a puppy to use paper or a litter box

- 1.** Know that paper training may slow the process of getting the puppy to develop an outdoor substrate preference. But in some cases, it may be your only option.
- 2.** If you must train a puppy to eliminate on paper or in a litter box, put the paper or box in one place, preferably close to a door. Take the puppy to the paper frequently, and praise it when it squats.
- 3.** Consider putting heavy-gauge plastic under the newspaper to protect floors and rugs in case the puppy misses or the urine soaks through the paper.
- 4.** Getting the puppy outdoors still requires you to be home for awhile. If the dog is being trained to eliminate on paper, you still have to take it out three or four times a day (e.g., after meals, upon awakening, to play). Praise the puppy immediately during and after it squats.
- 5.** To wean the puppy from the paper, gradually start to move the paper one to two inches per day closer to the door. Spy on the puppy during weekends; as it begins to squat on the paper, rush outside and wait for it to urinate or defecate. This also helps to stop the dog from being fearful outside. Enthusiastically praise the puppy when it pees or defecates outside.
- 6.** Some people with small dogs elect to have the dog permanently trained to paper or a litter box. Litter boxes now are commercially available that are suitable for large dogs. Litter boxes are easier to handle for small dogs, but if you don't want the dog to rely on these, you must do the tasks described here. *Caution:* Litter boxes aren't intended to relieve you of having to take your dog out and about. Please don't use these as an excuse to not exercise your dog, let it explore the world or engage in free play with other dogs.