

Housetraining by Marcia Albert

When we first bring a puppy home, housetraining is probably the top item on our dog To-Do List. As we well know, the sooner housetraining is started, the faster we can put away the paper towels and cleaners.

If all goes according to plan, the dog soon makes the connection, and while life with a puppy never returns to the pre-puppy normal, at least we can devote some time and attention to other issues: nipping, jumping, chewing, crate training, etc.

But sometimes it's just not as simple as we assume it will be. As a dog trainer I hear many questions concerning problems with housebreaking. The topics include:

- puppies that don't seem to catch onto the idea
- mature dogs who've never been trained
- adopted adult dogs who are confused in their new home

Is there an absolutely fool-proof way to solve these housetraining issues?

I can't promise you 100% success, but I have talked to enough owners, given the following steps and then checked on their progress to know that many housetraining problems can be helped.

There is no magic to this, and there is hard work involved. You must be 100% consistent, patient and persistent.

- Schedule food and water. Feed the dog at a certain time, offer water and then remove both. You will need to give the dog additional water about every three hours during the day.
- Supervise your dog 100% of the time. Confine him with gates or x-pens, put him in his crate or put his leash on and take him wherever you go.
- Take him out several times during the day.
- Always use the same door to go out and return.
- Put his leash on before you open the door. Say "Let's go potty" or some phrase that signals this is a bathroom trip, not a walk or playtime
- Take him to the same spot. You may want to take paper towels that you used to clean up an accident in the house and place them in this spot to give him an incentive.
- Say "Get busy" or "Go piddle", etc.
- If he eliminates, wait until he's finished, then immediately praise him and offer a treat.
- Return to the house using the same door. Don't play or romp at this point. You want him to associate the trip outside with elimination.
- If you've been outside and he is not doing anything go inside and either confine or supervise.
- Make a trip outdoors every 5-10 minutes until he is successful.
- Even after eliminating watch him carefully.

Housetraining some dogs is difficult. but follow these steps and you'll be well on your way!