



House Training Your Dog

By **Brenda F. Barnette, CEO**

Dogs are instinctively clean animals. They prefer not to soil their living quarters. If the human is consistent about the process, houstraining a dog usually isn't difficult.

Your new family member may find moving to a new house confusing. The layout of your house will be unfamiliar to him. He doesn't know which doors lead to the outside. And he may or may not have been houstrained before. Assume that any new dog, whether adult or puppy, needs houstraining.

Before entering your house, take your dog on a leash to the yard where you want his "bathroom" to be. You may need to walk with him as he explores the area. Once he takes care of business, praise him so he knows he has done the right thing.

When you bring the new dog into the house, have his den (crate) ready for him or a small "safe" space defined for him that can be easily cleaned, such as a bathroom with a gated entrance or a fenced-off part of the kitchen. Put his special bed, toys, and food inside his space. Visit and play with him often and begin each visit with a trip out to his "bathroom" and lavish him with praise after he goes to the bathroom.

Take your dog out to her "bathroom" area on a regular schedule. Young puppies should be carried outside for their break every hour, as soon as they wake up from a nap and immediately after a meal. If it is hard to keep track of the time, set an alarm clock or kitchen timer to remind you of when the next potty break should be. Depending on the age and size of your puppy, you may determine that he needs to go out more often at first. That's okay. The time between bathroom breaks will expand as he gets older. Stick to the schedule, even on weekends, and be sure to feed your dog on a regular schedule, too.

Watch for your dog's signal to you. Circling and sniffing are often indications your dog needs to go out. Some people like to teach the dog to ring a bell as a potty break signal. Hang a bell on the door and make a game of ringing it each time you take the dog out until she gets the idea to ring the bell herself. One of my little dogs jumps into my lap and playfully nips my nose. It took her quite a while to teach me that this meant it is time to go outside!

Until you are sure your dog is houstrained, he needs to be supervised 100% of the time when he is indoors and out of his "den." He can be on a leash attached to you or a family member. Wait until you are sure he is reliably houstrained before you let him have the run of the house.

Scolding for mistakes can do more harm than good. If you see a mistake happening, rush the dog outside and then praise him once he finishes his business outside. Be sure to clean accidents thoroughly to keep the area from smelling to your dog like it is the right place to soil.

Dogs, like people, learn at different rates. There are days when your dog seems to understand where to go and other days when he can't remember a thing. This is a normal part of the learning process. Invest the time and patience to properly houstrain your dog and your reward will be a lifetime of unconditional love from your furry family member.