

The Puppy House Training Check-List

Adapted from Drs. Dan & Suzanne Hetts, Animal Behavior Associates Inc.

House training puppies is a matter of helping them develop a strong preference for eliminating in the appropriate place or places. Dogs naturally avoid eliminating in their living space. However, they need to be taught what their living space is and where the appropriate place to eliminate is. Put this check list on your refrigerator, bathroom mirror or other place where you will see it several times a day. Read down the check list every time you pass it to be sure you are house training correctly.

- Are you maintaining realistic expectations? It will take time, don't expect it to be completed in just a few days. Accidents will happen, be prepared to clean them up with a good enzymatic cleaner to eliminate odors.
- Are you being consistent in your house training? Providing supervision, taking her to her elimination area frequently, making it difficult for accidents to happen?
- Are you providing constant supervision? Leash her to your belt or to your chair. Watch for signs she needs to eliminate. Block off areas of the house or keep her in a small area (exercise pen, crate, mud room) when you can't watch her. Don't use the confinement area as a substitute for supervision.
- Are you taking your dog to her elimination area –
 - First thing in the morning
 - After eating
 - After play
 - After naps
 - Last thing at night
 - Any time she looks uncomfortable – Shows signs of sniffing, circling, scratching at the floor, arching her back, and/or squatting
- Are you asking your dog “Do you want to go out?” “Let's go potty!” or some similar phrase, in an excited voice when you take her to the elimination area?
- Are you going with your dog to be sure she eliminates in the appropriate place?
- Are you rewarding your dog with praise, petting and/or treats for eliminating in the right place?
- If your dog doesn't eliminate when you take her to her spot, are you bringing her back in, supervising her and taking her out again in a few minutes?
- Are you avoiding rushing your dog when you take her out to eliminate? Are you avoiding bringing your dog right in after she finishes? If she isn't allowed to do something fun after she eliminates, she may be reluctant to eliminate outside next time.
- Are you avoiding punishing your dog if she has an accident? Punishment even a few moments after an accident will not teach her not to eliminate inappropriately. Just clean up the mess and plan how to avoid accidents in the future.
- If you are having difficulty house training your dog, have you consulted your veterinarian? Some medical conditions can interfere with house training. If it is not a medical problem, have you consulted with an experienced dog trainer or behaviour consultant?