

DogWise Ireland

TOILET TRAINING

Routine

As with any training, starting off with a good routine will help the puppy learn more quickly. The first tip I always give a new owner is to make sure that, as soon as they arrive home with the new puppy, they go straight out into the garden and let the puppy relieve itself.

There are two main reasons for this, firstly, even a short car journey can stimulate the puppy to need to go to the toilet and secondly, right from the word go you are establishing where they should go to the toilet.

Make sure you have already decided on where the puppy is going to sleep in the house.

Limit access to other parts of the house until they are fully toilet trained.

If you want to introduce them to other parts of the house, take them with you on the lead.

This ensures they cannot have an accident and also helps teach them to be calm around the house.

I encourage my puppies to go out in the garden right from the beginning. If you have papers or training pads on the floor, keep them near the door that gets them out to the garden and when you see the puppy head that way, encourage them to go on out into the garden. Don't become too reliant on paper or pads, some puppies become accustomed to going in the house and will even hold on when they are in the garden thinking they are supposed to go indoors.

Very young puppies don't understand that they need to let us know they need to go out, it is up to us to help them and set the routine. They have little or no bladder control, you will need to be prepared to take the puppy out approx. every 30 minutes when they are awake, and be prepared that in the first few weeks you will need to get up during the night to let them out.

Stay outside with them

If you want your puppy to go out in the garden you will need to go out and stay out with them.

Some can be a little apprehensive about being out there on their own, particularly if the weather is not good or it is dark, and they will just sit at the back door. Put on your coat and go with them.

This will benefit in a number of ways, it will enable you to use your cue and reward them when they do go, it also means you know that they have done everything, particularly important before bed time or before you go out.

If you have a puppy who likes to wander into bushes and you can't see what is going on, keep them on a long lead.

Be Vigilant

Yes, there are times you will need eyes in the back of your head. If you cannot watch them, even just for a few minutes, pop them somewhere safe – in their crate, playpen or out in the garden. You can also have a lead on them to prevent them wandering off. As much as possible you want to avoid unnecessary accidents.

If the puppy spends most of its time on a wooden or tiled floor, don't allow unsupervised access to carpet areas or mats, to a puppy these can look and feel very similar to training pads or grass.

Signs to look out for – puppy gets distracted while you are playing or training - puppy starts sniffing or circling.

Predicting

There are a number of key times when puppies need to go out to the toilet, for example -

- As soon as they wake up
- After eating
- After having a drink
- During or just after playtime or training time
- When you or anyone else comes in
- Before you go out
- Before bedtime
- During the night (for very young puppies)

Use a Cue or Command

Using a cue or command can be hugely beneficial to speed up the process.

How do we do that? – when you take your puppy out to where you want them to go, walk around slowly and calmly and allow them to ramble around and have a sniff. As soon as they start to go, give your command ‘Hurry Up’ or ‘Be Quick’, keep the command and any praise you give quite calm, if you get too excited it can cause the puppy to stop what it is doing. Once they have finished you can have a little playtime but remember to allow them to go again after play before you go back inside.

Crate training

Using a crate or puppy pen can really help with many areas of your training including toilet training. The smaller, confined space, encourages them to hold on until you take them outside. The crate should be big enough for the puppy to stand up, turn around and stretch out comfortably.

Avoid using a huge crate, with a bed one end and a pad/paper at the other end, again this just encourages the puppy to keep going inside and close to their bed. If you need to use the paper or pad overnight or while you are out, I put the crate, with the door left open, into a play pen. This helps the puppy learn that they need to get out of the crate to relieve themselves and not go in the crate itself.

Night time

Don't feed the puppy a full meal close to bed time.

Take them outside last thing and make sure they have done everything before settling them down for the night.

Confine them to a small area. If they have access to a large kitchen, or similar, most puppies will simply get out of bed, move away from the bed and feeding area, do what they have to do and go back to bed. By making the accessible space smaller, they are more inclined to hold on for a little while or let you know that they need to go out.

During the night or in the morning -As soon as there is any movement in the house the puppy will wake up and he/she will need to go out as soon as possible.

Remember, be patient, the puppy needs time to learn and getting annoyed won't help things.

If the puppy makes a mistake it is down to lack of understanding.

Shouting at them, or sticking their nose in it, is a definite no. Very often a puppy will start to toilet behind the sofa, go under a table or simply wait until you are not watching and then

relieve themselves. In this situation they have learned that what they are doing gets you annoyed but they do not understand what it is you actually want. Instead, stay calm, clean up and remind yourself that you need to be more vigilant in future.

By Judith Owens Poole, DogWise Ireland.