



Housetraining Your New Puppy

The Secrets of Successful Housetraining

Understanding that dogs have no moral or physical attachments to your new carpet or freshly waxed hardwood floors is the first step to helping your canine companion learn the ins and outs of housetraining- literally and figuratively!

Housetraining is easy if you can simply relax and understand that dogs are just dogs, and they really don't care where they eliminate until you teach them differently. The challenge you face is that you will need to communicate to your dog or puppy that "going" where you prefer will be worth his time and effort.

In other words, in your dog's mind, the carpet is just as good as the grass, the tile floor is more convenient than the cold patio, or the rug by the doggie door is faster than going outside through that flapping thing that touches him on the butt as he exits.

Good housetraining behaviors not only include the physical mechanics of training, (coupled with a good reinforcement history), it also requires a realistic view of dogs so that your focus is not on accidents, but on successes.

Note: This guide will address normal housetraining and associated problems. It will not address urine-marking or submission urination problems, but using much of this information will also have a positive effect on those issues as well.

What can you *really* expect at different life stages?

Puppies under 24 weeks old: Puppies naturally do not want to soil their own space and will readily leave their sleeping area to eliminate if provided with a convenient place to go when they "feel the need." This is a natural behavior for puppies that is learned early on from their mothers.

At around 3-4-weeks-old, the mother dog stops cleaning up after the puppies. This is also the age when they are becoming mobile and begin to

follow their mother out of the whelping area when she leaves. All that movement produces "movement" and the puppies are able to successfully use areas away from their sleeping quarters. It only takes a few good repetitions of this and the puppies naturally start to build bladder and bowel muscles along with a preference of eliminating away from where they sleep. It doesn't take long before the puppies are able to "hold it" for longer and longer periods of time. This is why puppies easily accept crate training when it is introduced properly.

The beauty of using a crate or managed confinement is that housetraining comes together in just a matter of weeks when the confinement is used correctly.

Unfortunately, this natural process is often interrupted when a puppy is not provided access to areas away from his sleeping quarters. Puppies that have been kept in confined areas, such as in some pet shops, are often more difficult to housetrain than puppies that are given the opportunity to leave, or be removed regularly to relieve themselves in the early stages of their lives.

While every puppy is different, with a strong positive reinforcement history it can be expected that most puppies should be sleeping through the night by 10-14 weeks and be pretty reliable in the house by 14-18 weeks.

The real trick to success at these early ages is the combination of a positive reinforcement history, and prevention of as many accidents as possible. The recommendation is to set up a schedule and really stick with it until you are sure your puppy is able to "tell" you when he has to go to the potty area.

This may require that you take your puppy out as often as every 1-2 hours in the early stages and always after the puppy has eaten, waken up from a nap or just had a play session. Those situations

require taking the puppy out then, in addition to the 1-2 hour schedule in the beginning.

The good news is that you should be able to space the timing out a little more every day, as puppies mature that quickly. Still, you will need to keep an eye on your puppy to avoid “mistakes,” until you have constant successes.

Adolescent dogs: This category would include most dogs from 6 months to somewhere close to two-years of age. Again, every dog is different and some may mature faster than others, but it is generally thought that most dogs reach full maturity by the age of two.

Crate or confinement training is always the fastest and most effective route to successful housetraining, but at this age it is even more important that if you do choose this method, that you introduce confinement or crates as a positive and comfortable place for your dog to hang out between the times spent with you or the family.

The best part of working with an adolescent dog is that they are readily housetrained with less effort than most puppies. It only requires consistency in giving them the “correct” answers about where you would like them to go.

Training the adolescent dog is easier since they are not only more mature in age, but also in body. Their bladders and bowels are stronger, generally enabling them to hold on longer between visits to the relief area. They are also more mature emotionally and it is this combination that facilitates faster housetraining than with most young puppies.

Expectations- the Reality Check

Whether your pooch is an 8-week-old puppy or a 10-year-old adult dog, you can, and should expect the “3 P’s”- Poop, Pee and Puke at some point in their lives! Even the most housetrained pups or fastidious dogs can, and do have accidents, get tummy aches, or are left indoors a little too long when traffic jams and overtime at work delay their humans from getting home at a reasonable hour to let them out. All of the above mentioned reasons,

(as well as many more), might cause your dog to have an accident or two during their lifetime; (and don’t be surprised if you happen upon it in the middle of the night with both feet at least once!).

The main consideration is to realize that dogs don’t do these things to upset you; these occasions are nothing more than accidents and should be given little, if any attention if you don’t want your dog to become anxious about this kind of mishap in the future.

Realistic expectations are very important to successful housetraining. It’s essential to realize that dogs don’t adhere to human principles; they don’t feel remorse about reliving their bladder on the carpet- it’s just as good a place to go as the grass, at least until you teach them differently. The reality of having a dog that has not been taught where to go is much like having a precocious, 1-year-old child in the house, unsupervised and not wearing a diaper! That is the level of supervision and management commitment you will need to housetrain your puppy.

The best advice for anyone with a dog- housetrained or not- is to have a good carpet steam cleaner along with a gallon of a good enzymatic cleaning product to make sure you get all of the mess cleaned up when those accidents do happen.

The Power of Positive Reinforcement

If ever there were a running thread of advice for successful housetraining, it is prevention and positive reinforcement training. Each time your dog has an “accident” in an inappropriate area, he is actually being reinforced for going there since the relief of emptying the bladder or bowels is a rewarding feeling in itself. Add to that the convenience of not going outside if it’s raining or hot, or the soft feel of your new area rug under your dog’s feet, and your dog might just be convinced to continue to eliminate where it is most comfortable or convenient.

The Importance of your Puppy’s Reinforcement History

Reinforcement history is the number of times a behavior has been reinforced versus the number of times it has not. This sounds pretty simple, however, it can work both ways. For instance, if your puppy has been having lots of accidents in the house and few successes in the area where you would like to have him eliminate, your puppy's reinforcement history is weighted toward the side of going in the house. Puppies repeat behaviors that result in reward and relieving the bladder or bowels is a big reward, which means that they are more likely to go in the house over and over again if that has been "working," in his effort to relieve himself. It's also easy to see it go the other direction as well. In other words, if your puppy has had only a few accidents and lots of successes in the potty area (coupled with praise and/or a treat) you are weighting the scale on the side of successful housetraining.

By now, you should understand that your puppy has no particular investment in your home or flooring, and that means it is your responsibility to prevent accidents and reinforce the successes. This is how you establish a positive reinforcement history for you and your dog!

The Ins and Outs of Successful Housetraining

Where to start? Housetraining should start with a plan and the best way to visualize a plan is to keep a log. There is a sample log at the end of this guide for you to copy or to give you some ideas on how to create your own version.

Typically, plan to take your puppy outside to the potty area at least every 1-2 hours in the beginning stages of housetraining, and always be willing to adjust this if your dog is having accidents within this time schedule.

Setting an alarm is a good reminder if you think you will have trouble remembering.

Young puppies should always be monitored either in a crate or in the visual range of the pet parent at all times to make sure that they don't have accidents.

Size and age considerations: The younger the puppy and/or the smaller the puppy adds some variables to housetraining. Puppies under 10 weeks will need to be taken out more frequently because of the immaturity of their brains, their bladders and their bowels. Toy or tiny breed dogs often need more opportunities to go out in the beginning since they have tiny bladders that can only expand so far. This should be considered, not only during housetraining, but for long-term confinement as well.

The good news is that a week of practice can make a world of difference when housetraining a young puppy or a tiny dog, so don't fret, it will get better if you stick with your training.

How do you know when to take them out: In the beginning, young puppies won't know how to tell you that they need to go out so you will have to watch them for the tell-tale signs.

Here are some of the signs that your puppy needs to go out:

- Sniffing the ground
- Abruptly stop playing or chewing
- Sniffing in circles
- Whining or barking
- Play biting more
- Going to or toward the door
- Starting to squat
- Scratching at crate door
- Barking at door
- "Zooming" around the house at breakneck speed

Paper Training: When training young puppies, the question of pee pads or paper training often comes up. If you intend for your dog to use pee pads or paper for the rest of their lives due to lack of yard, or the size of the dog, then using pads or papers are fine and you would train the same way as for going outside, just take them to the pad or paper as part of the plan. However, if you eventually intend to have your puppy go outside, it's always best to teach your dog to go there to begin with and save yourself the time of training a 2nd time when you are ready for them to use the great outdoors. Some exceptions might

be the weather, or if you have to take your puppy to potty in an area where there have been lots of adult dogs and your puppy is not fully vaccinated.

Food and its effects on housetraining: One factor that can help with housetraining, as well as with other impulse control issues, is the quality of the food you feed your dog. Many brands of puppy food contain a high percentage of corn, (which is used as a source of protein). Many other puppy foods contain high amounts of carbohydrates such as rice, soy and wheat that are used mostly as filler. Dogs don't need carbohydrates, (like we do), but if your food contains them, they should be complex carbohydrates that are from human-quality sources, and that is where some of the dog foods miss the mark. Often, the grains in dog foods are sub-human quality products that often include only the broken portions of the grain. Adding fillers, such as these, only serve to add empty carbohydrates and calories, and not necessarily nutritional content.

Much like when athletics "carb up," it is not hard to imagine your dog or puppy getting ready to run a marathon after eating the vast amounts of carbohydrates found in a number of common dog foods.

If you are feeding these types of food, your puppy will have a harder time staying focused and learning- after all, thinking clearly is hard to do on a sugar high, which is what happens when the body converts carbs to glucose!

The other problem with ingredients such as wheat and soy is they can also contain mold spores that are known for causing allergic reactions. Even mild sensitivities can affect the success of housetraining since internal irritations lead to distractions and stress on the body in general. Physical stress, such as food sensitivities (some may not even manifest into visible symptoms, but may exist nevertheless) requires more fluids to produce chemicals to try and counter the reactions, and in turn more urination, making housetraining more difficult. Excess water drinking can and often is a sign of physical or mental stress, and if medical problems such as a bladder infection have been ruled out, this is most

often a sign of a stressor. With that in mind, it is best to eliminate the two most allergy associated grains from your dog's food- wheat and soy- this allows you to start on an even field when trying to housetrain.

Snacks and treats should also be of the same high quality ingredients as the dog food, so be sure to read the labels and avoid corn, wheat and soy products.

One more component to successful housetraining is when to feed your dog. Puppies under 6 months are typically fed 3-4 times a day, which means that you will need to take that puppy out within 15-30 minutes after they eat. It's important to have your puppy on a schedule that can predict when your puppy will have to go potty so free feeding is not an option.

Adolescent and adult dogs should eat at least twice a day, and, again, it is important that you do not "free feed" your adult dog since that nibbling all day can result in unpredictable bowel habits.

The Housetraining Plan

Again, stressing that prevention and a strong positive reinforcement history are the keys to successful housetraining; the actual process is relatively simple.

The following are some of the preparation ideas and things to consider before putting your housetraining plan into place.

Where do you want the puppy to go? Making a decision about where you would like your puppy to go is the first step to successful housetraining. Many people have limited areas to relieve their puppies and must take them on leash to that area. Some have small dogs that they would prefer to train to use a littler box, paper or a pad. Still others would prefer their puppy use the back yard, but only in one area, or maybe on a concrete patio. And, finally, there are others that allow free access to the whole yard and really don't care where they eliminate, just so long as it's not in the house.

Some of this decision will also need a look at the person's lifestyle: Will the puppy need to be able to go on different surfaces because the pet parent travels to many different areas? Will the puppy need to be able to eliminate on a leash, or off a leash? In this case, both on and off leash will need to be practiced. Will the puppy need to use a litter box sometimes, but at other times use the grass during an outing? Again, this will take some practice with both areas.

Timing is everything to successful housetraining. Be sure to give your puppy lots of opportunities to go out in the beginning. When he is successful, you will need to communicate that he did the correct behavior, but only *after* he is completely finished.

One of the most essential components of successful housetraining is to go with your puppy to the potty area during this initial training. Equally as important is to have them on a leash right from the beginning so they are not able to wander off and "forget" what they are doing. Once you see that your puppy really has the idea of what he is supposed to be doing, you no longer have to use the leash, but you will still want to go with them in the early stages of housetraining.

The most successful housetraining routines are ones that limit the amount of time you have your puppy in the potty area, and the use of managed confinement or a watchful eye until success is achieved.

When puppies are allowed to sniff around or wander through the yard without going potty and then are given free rein once back in the house, (despite not having gone while outside), accidents are in the making. Many puppies put two and two together and get in lots of sniffing and playing around because eliminating often means they have to go back in the house and it's way more fun outside. They then learn to not go potty outside because it will end the fun; of course, shortly after they go back in, they can't hold it anymore.

To insure that this doesn't happen, a leash and a watch are your best tools.

Take your puppy to the potty area, on a leash and start timing the session as soon as you get there. Plan on 3-4 minutes, but no more. This will teach your pooch to hurry up and finish so he can get his reward and a chance to play. You can walk around that area if want to, but stay relatively close to where you want your puppy to go. Moving around can, and often does, make things happen quicker.

During this time you can also put the action of going in one place on a verbal cue, by saying something like, "Go potty, or hurry up," so your puppy eventually learns to go when you say those words. Service dogs do this all the time, and it's very easy to teach your dog to go when you would like by associating the words and the actions during the early learning stages.

If your puppy is successful during the 3-4 minutes, tell them, "Good dog," in a happy voice, and give them a couple of really wonderful food treats such as a small pieces of chicken or cheese to make the process of learning that much faster.

Giving your dog a high-value food treat after your pooch has finished eliminating starts the process of building bladder and bowel muscles by teaching your dog that waiting to go in the designated potty area will result in a high-value food reward. If he goes somewhere else, the result is neutral, so it's much better to "hold it," (building muscle) and go to that place that results in the food!

You can also "buy" some extra insurance that your puppy will love to go to the potty area by taking him off the leash and playing with him after he has gone potty and received his food treat. This will teach him to hurry up and go because he not only get that great food, and your praise, but a play session as well!

What to do if your pooch doesn't go: If your puppy doesn't go in that 3-4 minute time period, take him away from the area and place him back into the crate or confinement area, or be prepared to keep your eye on him at all times so he don't wander away and eliminate when you aren't looking. You want this time between sessions to be as non-eventful as possible, and that is why a crate or confinement is best. Once your puppy is back

inside, you will wait for 10-15 minutes and then take them back to the potty area again and start the timing process all over. Usually, it only takes a couple of these sessions to get success, and if you are diligent about using this plan first thing in the morning, when you know your puppy will need to go potty, you will obtain your dog's housetraining skills very quickly.

Using a clicker: This plan can also be done with a clicker to mark the correct behavior. It's important to click as soon as your puppy has finished, and then follow with the food treat, praise and the play. If you intend to use a clicker, be sure to get clear instructions about how to use it before trying it with housetraining. Your puppy should already know that the clicker marks the correct behavior and that food will follow after hearing the clicker sound before trying it with housetraining. The clicker frightens some puppies and housetraining could be set back if you tried to introduce it and your puppy were frightened by the sound. It's important that you have already associated the clicker with food before using it during housetraining.

What to do if you "catch" them in the act of going in the house: Catching your puppy going potty in the house should always be a non-event, (as hard as it might be to see your pooch squatting on the carpet or new hardwood floor!).

Puppies that receive too much negative attention for this may become frightened and learn to hide when they need to go. In contrast, they might come to believe it is a good way to get human attention even if your tone of voice was harsh—many puppies especially love to hear our voices and it might actually become a reward in the puppie's mind.

Calmness, on your part, will keep the stress levels down for you and your dog as well and not give attention to the mistake. What you should do is quietly pick up a puppy or small dog, and gently guide a bigger puppy toward the area where you would like them to go. The key is to act as if it is no big deal.

If they didn't finish going potty in the house, stay with them until they do then let them know the correct answer by telling them, "Good dog," when they are finished, and then give them a high value food treat. If they did finish going in the house, you will still go through the motion and use the timed plan of 3-4 minutes while saying your cue word. When the time is up, take the puppy back into the confinement area or crate until the next scheduled session to go out.

Most importantly, promise yourself to keep a better eye on him until the subsequent time you will be taking your puppy to the potty area.

Using a doggie door: Doggie doors are wonderful tools. They can help facilitate your housetraining by giving your puppy access to the great outdoors whenever he needs to relieve himself. The initial training is the same; you will just be encouraging your puppy to go in and out of the doggie door as part of the process. It sometimes helps to tape the flap up when you first begin so the flap touching your puppy's body as he goes through does not frighten him. Be sure to be waiting on the other side of the doggie door with a small treat as a reward for going through in the first place. This will make it much easier when you do put the flap down and your puppy has to push his way through.

After you are convinced that your puppy can manage to get through the doggie door without a problem, you can then advance to the housetraining part. Make sure you are waiting on the other side of the door with your leash and food treats and praise your puppy for coming out the doggie door, then attach the leash and happily go to the potty area. Follow the training plan as laid out, but if your puppy doesn't go, just go back into the house after the allotted time through the regular door, and not the doggie door at this point. The reason is that you will want to be able to get your puppy into the confinement area as quickly as possible when he hasn't gone potty.

How long between? Once you have had a successful round of the timed plan, the next question would be when to take them out again. If you spent some time playing afterwards, you can then give your puppy a little more time to explore

in the house with you, chew on a bone, or take a nap depending on the age of the puppy.

Puppies under 4 months can be on a 45-minute to one-hour interaction time schedule, and then they can spend about 1-2 hours in the crate or confinement area to make sure they get enough sleep. At the end of the interaction hour, take them to the potty area and put it on the clock for those 3-4 minutes. (However, don't wake your puppy up if he is sleeping, but do be ready to take him out if more time has passed than your allotted scheduled time.)

If your puppy is successful going potty, have a short exploration of the environment, (this can be a quiet walk around the yard, or allowing them to sniff the grass), spending up to that 45 minute timeframe with you, and then it's naptime again for the puppy. The important component here is to allow the puppy to spend a little bit of time doing something fun and interactive with you, rather than going back into the house or his confinement area.

Older puppies and young dogs can spend up to two hours of interaction time, and this makes a great time for a daily walk or play session as long as the play is not too over-stimulating since you want your dog to rest, or be left in the crate when you are done. You would use the same process with this age group after the interaction time, so they also get to take a nap after the two hours of time awake. *This interaction time could be used as the transition for when they are left in their crates or confinement areas while humans go off to work or to do other activities.

**Please be sure that you have introduced the crate as suggested in the crate and confinement section of this guide and that you adhere to the time limits of using crates to those recommended for each age group.*

Other considerations to insure houstraining success: There are several other ways to insure your puppy is successfully houstrained in a short amount of time. Here are some things to consider:

- Limit water after a certain time at night for young puppies. Pick up the water dish about two hours before they are going to go to bed at night. (Please don't limit water if your house is hot in the summertime). This will make sure that the bladder is empty and doesn't fill up as fast after you take them out for the last time at night.
- Be sure your puppy is getting plenty of rest and sleep so his body can recoup after exercise, training or play; all of which require mental and physical energy. Many puppies don't get enough rest and this makes for a cranky pooch that may not want to put in as much effort into finding his potty area when he needs to go.
- It can't be said enough that you are responsible for teaching your puppy the rules for living with humans since no one gave them the "owner's manual" on how to live with us. If your puppy is having accidents, you need to limit your puppie's freedom and keep a better eye on him between training sessions.
- Be sure that you have regular medical checkups for your puppy so he is always in optimum health. This will eliminate houstraining accidents from health problems that can turn into real issues even after your puppy's health is better.

When are they reliable? Generalization needs to take place before your puppy can be considered fully houstrained. That means that just because your puppy now understands that going in the kitchen is not the correct answer, doesn't mean that he will know that going in the bedroom is also not correct. Your pooch should learn how let you know he needs to go to the potty area from many locations in the home if you eventually want to allow them access to the entire house. but be sure to supervise when allowing him more freedom.

- Most puppies are considered pretty reliable at around 4-6 months, but this doesn't mean that they would understand the same rules apply even when visiting someone else's home. (Some puppies can

take much longer, so don't despair if your puppy takes a little more time.) You would need to go back to your timing and reward routine anytime you take your dog into a new place. The nice thing about having practiced at your home is that it should only take a few times of practice in the new location for your dog to understand that it is the same rules, just a different location.

- You will also need to practice both on and off leash and in different areas away from the designated potty area if you would like your pooch to go potty in different settings that might include being on or off leash. Some people get stuck with only having their puppy go in the back yard and then when they take a trip the puppy nearly busts a gut when he hold it hours and hours because they he has never been taught to go in other places. Set up for success and use those morning times when your puppy is pretty much guaranteed to go, to take them to other areas; such as the front yard, a different area in the back yard, on dirt if they usually go on grass and visa versa.
- Houstraining sometimes goes awry when it rains or snows, and a puppy that was 100% reliable for a couple of weeks might now be having accidents in the house again. This just means that you have to generalize your training to inclement weather!
- Go back to the beginning. Yes, you will have to go with them, even if it's raining or snowing so they learn that the rules are still the same, even when their feet get wet or cold.
- As a side note, be sure to get your puppy used to an umbrella if you are going to use one, since they can be pretty scary to dogs that have never seen one before. Open it very slowly and low to the ground so your pooch can explore. Be sure to tell your puppy how brave he is by saying, "Good dog," and giving a treat for any interaction with the umbrella. You might even go so far as to spread treats all around the umbrella so your puppy can approach and

"find" that the umbrella is really just a big treat dispenser.

- Many people make the mistake of believing that if their puppy can hold it all through the night that they should be able to do the same during the day. However, just like humans that are able to hold it all night, there are a number of chemicals that kick in during sleep that slow down the production of urine. That system goes right back to work with the chemicals that are available when we are awake and humans and dogs alike need to "empty" much more during hours that they are awake. So, sleeping through the night is not a good example of how long a puppy is able to hold it.

Crate Training

Whether you are working on houstraining, or preventing your couch from being eaten in your absence, crate training is a wonderful management tool if introduced and used correctly. Making the crate a comfortable and non-stressful place for your dog should be your goal when introducing the crate; using this guide will help you achieve that goal with minimal effort.

Choosing the Right Kennel or Crate for your Dog

The type of crate you choose for your puppy is important for your puppy's safety and acceptance of being crated. The two most common styles are wire and airline-type, which are the hard plastic crates. There are many others on the market; some which come in "designer" styles to match many decors. However, most crates are "knockoffs" or clones of others, and the two most common ones, the wire and airline-type will be addressed in this article.

Both types of crates have advantages and disadvantages and you will need to



determine which best suits your dog by looking at the following pros and cons of each type.

Wire Crates:

Pros:

- Can be folded down for easy storage and placed under a bed or in the trunk of a car when traveling.
- For puppies that worry about you or the environment, these crate allow the dog full view of the room so they can keep an eye on things.
- Many come with a pull-out bottom tray for easy cleaning and some are adjustable for the size of the puppy. These are great for growing puppies since they allow you to buy only one crate that will “grow” with the puppy.
- Allows good air circulation.
- Can be covered if needed.
- Many have one-handed lock systems for easy in and out.

Cons:

- For puppies that are overly stimulated by the environment, this type of kennel may allow too much visual stimulus. These crates can be covered, but some dogs will pull the cover inside and shred it. Fortunately, there are commercial crate covers that are more difficult for dogs to pull through because they are form-fitted to the crate.
- Puppies that become panicked, might dig or bite on the wires and bottom tray which can cause damage to paws or may break teeth.
- Airlines do not accept this type of crate if you needed to fly your puppy somewhere.
- Since the wires can bend with excess pressure, dogs may escape easier from this style.

Airline-Type Crates:

Pros:

- This type of crate provides more of a visual obstruction of the environment and is useful for dogs that need less stimulation in their day.
- These crates also provide some noise dampening for dogs that are sensitive to sounds.
- Major airlines have approved this type of kennel for flying dogs in the cargo area of planes, but check on each company’s guidelines for flying animals.

Cons:

- These crates do not fold down and are more bulky to move, and the bigger ones do not fit well in smaller vehicles. They do, however, do well in the back of trucks if secured properly.
- Some puppies find this type of crate claustrophobic.
- If your house is not climate-controlled, these do not allow good air circulation during hot weather.

Other Considerations:

Once you have decided which crate or kennel best suits your puppy, you will then want to consider a couple of other things before you start training:

- Where to place the crate. Helping your puppy become comfortable in several locations of your home will optimize his comfort and make it easier if you travel with your puppy. By having your puppy rest and sleep in different parts of your home, he will learn to be familiar with his crate, even if you have to travel with him. When training your puppy to the crate, move the crate to different rooms so your puppy is comfortable in lots of settings, but do make sure these areas promote rest and sleep.
- What will you place on the bottom of the crate floor? Does your puppy love to

shred lots of things? Then purchasing an expensive crate pad might not be the best option, but a couple of folded towels might do just fine.

- Plan to leave some distractions such as stuffed *Kongs or rawhides in your puppy's crate, but be sure you know your puppy's chewing style before you leave any of these items in there unsupervised. If your puppy is a slow and steady chewer, then rawhides are a good choice, as are red-colored *Kongs. On the other hand, if your puppy is a voracious chewer that might ingest a whole rawhide in one sitting, this would not be a good choice as large pieces of rawhide can get trapped in a puppie's stomach or intestines. This type of puppy would do better with one of the black Kongs that were designed for strong jaws, or the extra hard nylon-type bones. **To learn how to make Kongs more challenging and fun for your dog, visit the Kong website: www.kongcompany.com*
- Finally, your puppy's crate should always be a safe place for your him. Try to think of the crate your puppy's "space," which means keeping other dogs, kids and random animals or people away from the crate when your puppy is resting. After all, it wouldn't be much fun to have someone disturbing you when you are in your bed!

Teaching your Puppy to Love the Crate

Even if your puppy is already using a crate, this fun, interactive version of getting your puppy in the crate and a very useful skill. If you have ever struggled with your puppie to get him in the crate, you will appreciate this easy training exercise, and the beauty of this is that it will have your puppy really enjoy going in on his own, rather than the daily bribing, or cajoling that makes crate training such a hassle. The best part is he will think that it is all his idea!

To ensure success, keep in mind that crate training should always be relaxing, rewarding and safe for your puppy, so if you are not in the training mood, save this exercise for a time when you can focus all your energy toward making this a fun game.

How long to crate?

The "rule of thumb" is that puppies under 6 months can be left in the crate for one hour for each month of age. For instance; a four-month-old puppy can be left for 4 hours during the day, but you will want to make sure to work up to this to ensure that your pooch is not going to have an accident. You do this by progressively adding more time as you introduce the crate.

Remember that many people make the mistake of believing that if their puppy can "hold it" all through the night that they should be able to do the same during the day. However, as already explained, just like humans who are able to hold it all night, there are a number of chemicals that kick in during sleep that slow down the production of urine for your puppy as well.

That production system goes right back to work when we are awake; meaning that humans and puppies alike need to "empty" much more during hours that they are awake. In other words, sleeping through the night is not a good indicator of how long a puppy is able to hold it.

Making the Crate Great:

Note: If your puppy seems uncomfortable or worried about going in the crate, has had a bad experience with crating in the past, or suffers from separation anxiety, it is important to not actually put the dog in the crate in the beginning. See the subsequent section on how to desensitize a negative crate experience after this segment.

Getting started:

Work in an area that is quiet and without distractions. Have 10-15 high-value treats counted out before you start. These could include very tiny pieces of hot dogs, cheese, cooked chicken, hamburger, etc. It's important that your dog has a significant emotional event in connection to the crate, and super good treats will make sure this happens.

Begin with your puppy on leash, and place or lure him into the crate. Again, if you think your puppy is worried or uncomfortable at this, or any other point along the way, skip to the desensitization training

section of this handout and work through that program before you continue with this part.

Leave the leash on your puppy and gently close the crate door, but there is no need to lock it. You want to be able to open and close the door quickly.

Slowly open the crate door, all the while using your body or leg to block the exit, to ensure your puppy cannot escape.

As the door opens, toss a treat to the back of the crate, and then close the door again. Be sure your puppy sees the treat in your hand as you toss it behind him. You are doing this to help move your puppy further away from the door so he learns that the good stuff happens toward the back of the crate. This will prevent him from rushing out the door when ever you open it, as well as teach him some self-control.

Repeat this until all the treats are gone. The important part of tossing the treats in when the door opens is to reward your dog for not coming out when the door opens each time, and also to send a message that the really good stuff happens in the crate.

Making sure your puppy does not escape; open the door as far as you can without your puppy charging out. If your puppy starts to move forward, gently close the door - do not slam it - to prevent him from coming out. After a couple of trials, your puppy will get the idea that staying back from the door will make it open.

Once you are able to open the door completely without your puppy rushing out, say a release word, such as "Okay, or Exit" and motion with an arm sweep for your puppy to exit the crate. Pick up the end of your puppy's leash as he is coming out, as you don't want him to stray too far.

Now, standing off to the side a bit so your puppy is able to go back in the crate, face the front door of the crate with your body turned so your shoulders face the entrance of the crate. Dogs understand body language so well, that by facing toward the crate it will tell him that he should move in that direction. (Kind of like a laser pointer that shows him where you want him to go) Be sure the leash is loose, but short enough that your puppy doesn't

wander 6 feet away and get busy doing other things.

(Hint: try switching to the other side of the door on the crate if your puppy does not seem to catch on right away.)

It is also important to remain quiet, without making eye contact with your puppy, thus allowing him to figure out what you want him to do by means of watching your body. After your puppy comes out, any interaction should be neutral and without any verbal or treat rewards. You will want your puppy to understand that the only reward he will receive is when he goes back in the crate where he will be rewarded with a jackpot of treats and verbal praise.

If, for some reason, your puppy does not exit the kennel when you say your release word, you will need to turn away (they will go the way your shoulders are pointing) and encourage him to come out by patting your hand on the side of your leg, making kissing noises, squatting down, etc. It is essential that your dog understands that your release word means to leave the crate. You might actually have to take a couple of steps away to encourage him to come out. Be sure to pick up the leash or take hold of it to prevent your puppy from wandering off once he does come out.

Again, it is imperative that you do not reward the exit, make eye contact or talk to your puppy! You want your puppy to make the connection that he can come out, but treats and praise only happen inside the crate.

Once your dog has exited the crate, wait for up to two minutes, *but no longer*. Be sure to time this and stay silent so your puppy can really put all of his concentration into this. The time limit is so your puppy doesn't get frustrated by a lack of foundation with this exercise. Don't worry if he doesn't get it the first time or so. Some puppies get it the first time, and some take a couple of sessions.

If your puppy goes back into the crate on his own during the two minutes, move ahead with the next part. If your puppy does not go back in during that time, go on to the "Helping your puppy" section.

Trainer's Tip: Don't burn your puppy out on training! Count out 30 treats and go as far as that will take you in a session. It's important to stop training when you have had a good success. If you count your treats, you will know it is time to stop when your puppy is doing well. It will also disappoint your puppy a little that you said, "All done," since he should be having a good time at this stage of the training. As they say in showbiz, "Always leave 'em wanting more."

Going forward

When your puppy goes back in the crate, say "Yep" or click and toss a treat to the back of the crate and close the door again. You can also add, "Good puppy." If you want to add a couple more reinforcement treats while he is still in there, then do it just like you did as you started with the 10 treats, but this time only do a few.

Repeat the entry and exit parts until you can start moving away a few steps from the kennel when the door is opened and without your puppy trying to exit the crate.

After your puppy readily goes in and out of the crate using "Okay, or exit" as his release, and your body posture as his cue to enter, it is time to add a verbal cue, such as, "Get in your kennel" or "Crate," just before your puppy starts to enter the crate.

Once you have established the verbal cue, you can start adding some direction and distance changes to the exercise. Take a few steps back, and to the left the next trial, then move to the right and add a couple more steps after you get success with one direction.

Once you can send your puppy to his crate from a couple of different distances and directions you are ready to move to the next level.

Building desire:

If you have taken your time to train lots of repetitions of the early pieces of this exercise, you should have a puppy that really wants to get in his crate! If you are sure that your puppy is showing that kind of enthusiasm, you can now build an even stronger desire to get in the crate by

restraining your puppy a little before releasing him to run to the crate.

For this part, you will want to be somewhat close to the crate since you are adding something new to the exercise. You will also work without the leash for this.

As you are getting ready to send your puppy to his crate, take hold of his collar and gently hold him back while saying, "Do you want to get in your crate?" with lots of excitement. (You want to restrain your puppy and get him thinking that he really would like to get away and get in the crate because it is such a cool place to be!) Once you build the excitement level, say, "Get in your crate!" and release your puppy. He should charge into his crate in anticipation of getting his treat inside! What fun for you and your puppy!

Trainer's Tip: It is important to mix things up so your puppy is always guessing and wants to play the game with you. This is achieved by varying the distance and the type of treats you use so your puppy will "gamble" that it just might be the really good stuff and so that he doesn't get bored with the same old thing. Changing the distance as you practice this exercise will also help your puppy to realize it is the same game no matter where the crate is located or how close or far you are from the crate.

Now that you have a puppy that wants to be in the crate, you can start adding some duration to the length of stay in the crate. Always be willing to go back to earlier steps if your puppy is confused or seems to have forgotten what you are doing.

Practice this whole series of steps many times, and over a number of days before locking your puppy in for longer periods. It is always better to start with short sessions that build up to longer ones. Better still, mix it up and do a few short sessions, a little longer one, and then go back to a short one. This will avoid a pattern that your puppy will quickly figure out and may not want to play if every time the result is he gets left in the crate for a long time.

As you start to add longer times within the crate, you could stash a really special bone or a

wonderfully stuffed Kong for your puppy to find as his reward for going in the crate. This will give him something to do as you leave him for longer and longer periods of time.

Also remember that the rules are still the same, even when you add duration to crating. Your puppy should remain in the crate as you open the door until you say “Okay.” That means no part of his body should cross the threshold of the crate until invited. If your puppy scoots or inches forward, be sure to gently close the door.

Helping your Puppy

If your puppy didn’t go back in his crate within the two minutes during the 1st trial of this exercise, start back at the beginning with luring him into the crate, and start over with the part where you open the door and toss in a treat section. When you are out of treats, follow the same instructions as before and wait the 2 minutes again.

If your puppy is just not getting it, stop and try again later, remembering to tell him, “All done.”

Many times, giving your puppy time to process what you have been doing will result in success the next time you practice. Wait at least 20 minutes to a couple of hours before trying again.

Trainer’s Tip: Make sure your puppy is hungry when you start this training, and consider the type of treats you are using, (see rank your dog’s treats later in this piece). Also make sure you have met your puppy’s needs by taking him to potty, getting a drink of water, and eliminating distractions such as other dogs or children that might disturb your puppy during the training. Also consider the time of day- maybe your puppy just wants to rest or sleep during that part of the day, making training more difficult.

Negative Crate Experiences

Negative crate experiences can be very stressful and traumatic for your puppy if you try to reintroduce the crate without a solid foundation of positive experiences with the crate. You will first want to identify the level of stress or fear your dog has associated with the crate in the past, and depending on the problem, you may be able to readily solve the problem with the following

exercises, or you may need to work with a behaviorist or a positive reinforcement trainer to help you formulate a plan to desensitize your dog’s fear of the crate.

The following are a few of the common issues that lead to crate problems or phobias for dogs and what you might need to do to help your dog desensitize to the crate:

- Puppy was introduced to the crate but cried and whined and pet parent abandoned its use. Puppy learned that crying and whining “works!”
- Crate was overused and puppy had accidents in crate or was left too long and became stressed from “holding it” (may need a professional behaviorist or trainer to help)
- Crate was not introduced as a fun and comforting place for the puppy
- Puppy was frightened while in the crate (may need a professional behaviorist or trainer to help)
- Crate was used as a punishment
- Puppy has separation distress (may need medication and a professional behaviorist or trainer to help)

How to Rank your Dog’s Rewards

Find your dog’s level 1 and 2 reinforcements in the following categories: food, toys or games, and environmental activities. You will need to list everything that you think might reinforce your dog’s behaviors. Once you have your list made, rate each item on a scale of 1 to 5, with #1 being the most valuable reinforcement- those would be the things that your dog gets really excited about.

Examples of food rewards:

Freeze dried liver

Chicken

Hot Dogs

Cheese

Natural Balance semi-soft food

Cooked eggs

Hamburger

Examples of toys or game rewards:

Tug-of-war

Fetch

Soccer

Squeaky toys

Frisbee

Being chased

Being petted

Final suggestions for the crate:

Be sure your puppy has had some exercise (not over stimulating exercise!) and has relieved himself before starting any training session, and before confining him for any length of time.

Never open the crate door if your puppy is whining or barking unless you feel as though your puppy is truly panicked. If you do, your puppy will learn to bark/whine in order to be let out of his crate! If your puppy seems distressed and you really feel that he needs something, wait until there is a moment of silence, or a less intense moment and then quickly open the door while saying "Okay" to release him. If you find the trend is getting worse, refer to a trainer that can help you work through this.

As you introduce the crate, you should first practice with the crate in areas when your puppy is able to see you. After a few sessions, when your puppy seems comfortable, then you will want to start placing the crate in other areas where he is not able to see you. Only move on to this stage when you have built a strong foundation of your puppy going into the crate like it's a game. After lots of practice, you should be able to send your puppy to his crate from anywhere in the house, provided you have a way to prop the crate door open. Small bungee cords work well for this!

If you walk by the crate while your puppy is inside and he is being quiet, drop some treats in with little or no fanfare. This will teach your dog that being quiet in the crate brings rewards!

Be careful not to teach your puppy that the crate equals you leaving. Use your crate when you are home, as well as when you are going out. If your puppy learns that going in his crate means you will soon leave, the crate can quickly become a source of stress for your puppy. You can practice by having your puppy enter the crate and spending time in there when you are not going anywhere. As you establish his comfort level, you will be able to work up to leaving your puppy in for longer periods when you are at home and while you are gone.