

ALL PAWS K-9 ACADEMY
HOUSEBREAKING TIPS
270-692-1729

1. Teach the pet where to go. The speed at which the pet learns where the owner wants it to eliminate depends directly on how consistently the owner accompanies it to the proper elimination area and praises or rewards it. Sometimes people take their pets out frequently and when they come back in they eliminate in the house. What's happening is, the pet isn't going out when it really needs to and it is getting confused. When it's outside, it has no idea why, it is just having a fun time with the owner. The solution is to go out or go to the papers, puppy pad or litter box with the pet and time this when the pet really needs to go and PRAISE,PRAISE, PRAISE for elimination in the correct area so that the pet learns where the toilet area is. If the owner gives up going outside or going to the toilet area too soon in the process the pet may begin to stray from the desired toilet area.

2. Control access to food and water. Feed pet twice or three times daily at the same time each day. Only leave food down for 20 minutes. Do not feed for three to four hours prior to bedtime. Take water up one hour prior to bedtime. This will help predict when the pet has to eliminate. Very young puppies need to eat at least 3 times a day and if the owner is gone for most of the day the puppy will not be able to hold it. A puppy can stay in a crate for one more hour than its age in months before it has to eliminate. A good idea is an exercise pen with a crate in it. The crate is kept open and the exercise pen is covered with papers. The puppy can go to the crate and rest but empty its bowel and bladder on the papers. If it is possible to come back every 4 hours to take the puppy outside, that is helpful.

3. Adequate supervision and confinement. Until the pet has not soiled in the house for 4 consecutive weeks, it must either be closely watched by a family member or must be confined to a crate. If the pet is going to be alone for several hours, confine it to an area with a "safe zone" for a toilet area. This can be a small room with newspapers in one corner, or an outside pen. Inexpensive outside pens can be purchased from Walmart or Lowe's for very reasonable amounts. Even if you have a "pet door", you cannot trust the pet alone in the house for many hours when you are starting housebreaking.

4. Odor control. Areas the pet has already soiled in the house are going to continue to attract the pet unless you are able to eradicate the odor. You may need a product that doesn't just mask odors, but actually "eats" the odor. Such products with enzymes and other odor eliminators are available for your veterinarian. As a rule of thumb, avoid using ammonia-based cleaners, or acidic cleaners with lemon juice or vinegar. Use Clorox bleach or baking soda for "homemade" odor control. You may need the veterinary products too. Moth balls will deter a pet from a favorite soiling spot, but they can be toxic to pets if eaten and, of course, the people have to smell them too. Still they may be handy for some areas and some pets. If the pet continues to soil a home area even after odor control has been used, the pet must be prevented from entering that room unless it is closely supervised or on a leash.

5. Teach the pet to signal when it has to eliminate. This can be done by keeping a close watch on the pet or even keeping it on a leash indoors, especially during times when it is likely to have to eliminate. WE START ALL OUR HOUSEBREAKING DOGS ON A LEASH IN THE HOME. We wear a belt and attach a 6' leash to the belt. That leaves your hands free to do dishes, etc. The pet must accompany you from room to room, but it is one of the best ways to prevent inappropriate urination or stool. Pets quickly learn to sneak away from the owner to avoid a scolding. When the pet is prevented from sneaking away, it will become anxious and vocalize, fidget, or begin sniffing the ground when it has to go. Since the owner is nearby, these behaviors will be noticed, and the pet can be taken outdoors and rewarded profusely as it eliminates. It doesn't take too many repetitions of this scenario for the pet to learn that being close to the owner and vocalizing or fidgeting results in a trip outside or to the papers for relief and a reward.

6. Punishment. Physical punishment should never be used for house-soiling. If a pet is caught in the act of inappropriate elimination, it should be interrupted with a shout and clapping the hands, a jerk on the lead if

attached, a loud noise of some kind like with a shaker can, air horn, ultrasonic device, rattling keys, or anything that will startle the pet. Blast of air from a lens cleaner can, water pistol, etc. The owner must know that it is never appropriate to strike the pet or threaten the pet. One of the most important things the pet must learn is that the owner's hand is its friend. The owner may get away with punishing and intimidate the animal by striking it, but it may begin to become frightened or even aggressive towards the hand that moves towards it.

Dragging the pet to a soiled area and shoving the pet's nose in it will teach only one thing: the pet will become aware that having the owner and soiled area in the same place at the same time is unpleasant. **HOWEVER, IT WILL NEVER LEARN TO ASSOCIATE THE ACT OF RELIEVING ITSELF WITH THIS SCENARIO.** People think that the pet has learned something by having its nose shoved in its soiled area because the pet acts "guilty" when it has an accident that the owner finds. But this is because the pet has learned the first thing, i.e. that having the owner and the mess in the same place at the same time equals punishment, not that the act of relieving itself brought the punishment. Dogs and cats do not make the logical deductions in thinking that we do. They live **IN THE MOMENT** and that is how we must learn to think, too if we want to train them. There is only one thing to do with a soiled place when the owner finds it and that is to clean it up.

7. Take the pet to the same area over and over when teaching where the proper elimination area is. The odor of urine and stool will be concentrated in the area and make it more attractive. Papers, outside, puppy pad or litter box, no matter what you use the pet must learn where the toilet area is.

8. Submissive greeting or urination should never be punished or it will get worse. This is when your dog rolls over or cringes and crouches as it "greet" you by urinating. It is dog language for saying that they recognize you as the pack leader and dogs that are very submissive will frequently do this. This kind of urination should never be punished or it will only get worse. With these kind of pets, keep your greeting very mild and unenthusiastic when you first come home. Try not to make a lot of dominant moves toward the pet like coming down right on top of it to pet it. Wait until the dog is more confident and calmer to approach and pet it. Try to crouch down too, scratch the pet's chest instead of reaching out to pat the head, and generally appear less threatening to this kind of pet. Remember, for dogs, direct eye contact can be perceived as a threat or challenge, so avoid direct eye contact with this type of pet when first greeting it.

9. Urine marking as with male dogs marking their territory by lifting their legs and urinating a small amount on vertical objects can be punished but is more effectively controlled by neutering. Remote punishment must be devised to control this problem when the owner is not present. Female dogs can also urine mark when they are in heat. This, too, is more effectively controlled by spaying.

10. Very old spayed female pets may lack bladder tone and "dribble" urine. This is not a behavior problem but a medical problem. Anytime your pet breaks its normal elimination schedule or habits you should consider a medical problem. Unusual urination patterns (dribbling urine, straining to urinate, more frequent urination, blood in the urine) may require a urinalysis. Unusual stool (diarrhea, constipation, or blood in the stool) may require a stool sample or other diagnostic work.