



CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSIONAL PET DOG TRAINERS

A PUPPY OWNER'S GUIDE TO HOUSE & CRATE TRAINING

One of the most important things you can teach your puppy is where and when to go potty, do it's business, make, well ... you know. Whatever we choose to call it, a great deal of trouble, heartache, anger and frustration is wasted on doggy house-soiling problems. You have a clean slate, a brand new puppy. Here are some pointers to help you teach your new family member proper house manners.

Do NOT give puppy full run of the house. One room at a time is enough to start with. Remember, a puppy does not view carpet as an expensive home furnishing. Money has no importance to dogs except as a nice snack. Carpet is either a wonderful chew toy or a convenient toilet. Keep this thought in mind at all times - ***A puppy out of sight is a puppy getting into TROUBLE.***

If no-one is watching, the puppy should be safely in a crate. Before anyone starts worrying about cages and confinement, please take a moment to think it over. A puppy in a crate is not chewing electrical cords or ripping up your sofa cushions. When puppy has peed on the carpet for the third time in half an hour and you have removed your hands from razor sharp jaws for the umpteenth time and dinner is late and the phone is ringing ... Puppy can go into the crate with some food and a chew toy and you can sit down with a glass of your favourite poison and wonder why you wanted a dog in the first place! The crate is a wonderful tool to use while you train your puppy. You would have some doubts about the parents of a human toddler who allowed the child unlimited access all over the house, wouldn't you? Don't give your puppy the chance to get into trouble. A crate is not meant to house your puppy all day every day. Think of a crate as a playpen or a crib. Puppy can be safely contained for short periods and overnight when you cannot be watching every second.

If your puppy has never been in a crate before you will need to spend some time getting your puppy used to the idea. Make the crate a comfortable and inviting place to be. Put toys and food in the crate and allow the puppy to investigate. Toss treats into the crate and let the puppy run in to get them. Once the puppy has gone in and out of the crate a few times, close the door of the crate. Your puppy will very likely whine and fuss to be let out. This doesn't mean the puppy hates the crate, just that the puppy would rather be with you. Sit beside the crate for a while, praise the puppy when the whining stops or there is some interest shown in the toys or treats. Do not let the puppy out of the crate until there has been quiet for at least thirty seconds. If you open the door while the puppy is making a fuss, you teach your puppy that making a fuss opens the door! Guess what happens when you want to sleep? During the night there is no better place for your puppy than in his crate. You can rest easily knowing that junior canine is not scratching holes in the kitchen cabinets, ingesting your baseboards, or eliminating where you are likely to step in it in the dark of night. If you think your pup needs to go, I mean really go, then stand close to the crate and try to get some quiet before you take the puppy out to pee. Take the puppy straight outside, wait five minutes and then right back in the crate. No play-time. You will soon be able to tell by the sounds of the whining whether your puppy is desperate for relief or just want to get out to chew on the cat!

*Take the puppy outside, or to a toileting area, after EVERY meal, when the puppy wakes up, after play, during play, whenever the puppy circles and sniffs the ground and any time the puppy looks ready to "go".
PRAISE, PRAISE, PRAISE your puppy for going in the right place.*

Sounds impossible, doesn't it? Don't worry, it won't be long before your puppy will get the idea and start going to the door, or at least making an effort to get there. Remember, a puppy is just a baby and they really won't have total control for a few months. Muscle control just isn't there in a baby dog yet. Most puppies will

learn very quickly that outside is a really good place to go. It may take longer for the idea to penetrate that going inside is completely unacceptable. Hint: if you find an “accident” at the door to the outside, the puppy has the idea. He just didn’t know how to make the door open! If you find an accident at the door, be *happy* (your training is working!) and be much more diligent watching your puppy for “signals” that he has to go outside.

If you catch the puppy in the act, say “Whoops. Let’s go outside,” or something else that isn’t a scream of “Nooooo, you horrible, bad, nasty puppy!” You are allowed to use a tone of voice that is strong enough to get your pup’s attention which might interrupt the flow. If you get too upset you’re likely to frighten your puppy into submissive urination. Puppies squat and pee to show submission to acknowledge a stronger animal. Do not scream, spank, shake puppy by the scruff or rub puppy’s nose in it. The last thing you want is a dog that pees whenever he sees you or is afraid to go in front of you and sneaks off to go when you aren’t looking. If you do find an “accident” do not scold the puppy after-the-fact. Contrary to popular opinion that the dog “knows” because of the “guilty” look, the dog is actually showing submission to your anger and dominant behaviour. If you must punish someone then give yourself a shake and good stern talking to. “Bad owner, keep your eyes on the puppy! Now go and clean up that mess!” You don’t even really need to yell or shake your finger – cleaning up the mess is enough punishment for most people. Always use an odour removing agent to remove every trace of odour. Dogs are more likely to go where they have gone before and the odour is what tells them it’s a good toilet place.

Overnight is going to be work for the first week to ten days depending on the size of your puppy. Forget sleeping through the night for the first week at least. Small dogs have wee tiny bladders and may need to go more often. A crate is a lifesaver at this point. If your puppy is very small, you might need to barricade the crate so that there is just enough room to stand up, turn around, lie down and stretch out. Any more room could be interpreted as a bathroom by the puppy. Keep the crate close to you so that you can hear if the puppy needs to go out. Give the last meal before seven in the evening. Make sure puppy has a chance to go out around ten to eleven and then bed down in the crate. Large breed puppies may need to be prodded awake to do this last night bathroom break, but persevere. I guarantee that if you do not, you’ll be staggering out of bed at three in the morning! You might have to get up around five or six in the morning for the first few days, but you can gradually extend the time by a few minutes every day. When you get up, do not stop for *anything* – get that puppy outside. The morning that you think, “I’ll just get my slippers,” will be the morning you’ll spend cleaning up the puddle on the floor. Keep your slippers, sweat pants, robe or whatever, ready beside the bed. A little planning beforehand cuts down considerably on the clean-up chores. Carry the puppy the first few mornings – sometimes the action of walking can get that bladder going. If you can’t carry the puppy, use a toy or a food treat or a leash to get the puppy to the door without stopping to squat.

Young puppies are eager to please and learn quickly. After the first few months, you’ll wonder what all the fuss was about. You’ll wake up late one morning and find that your puppy is still sleeping peacefully. You’ll realize that you haven’t had to clean up any accidents for three or four days. At this point it is tempting to start bragging that your puppy is housetrained at three and a half months. Be realistic – your puppy is still a baby and won’t have complete control for some time yet. If you leave the puppy along too long or forget to do that walk at night, you’ll get an accident. Patience is not only a virtue, it is essential in training a puppy. When you realize you haven’t had an accident in a month or so, then you can start bragging.