



RSPCA School for Dogs Information Sheet

Toilet Training

One of the most stressful and frustrating exercises of new puppy ownership is toilet training. Just when you think the puppy has got the right idea, you find another puddle! What do you do?

The association with a toilet spot will be built on the following things:-

- Smell (of urine, faeces or ammonia)
- Location
- Substrate e.g.: what the surface is made of
- This can be grass, sand, tiles, newspapers etc.
- Occasionally a word, command or sound
- Physiological things like feeding, sleeping and playing

The key to toilet training any puppy or adult dog is to limit unsupervised access to certain areas. Observe your dog closely at times when they are likely to need to go to the toilet. Take them to the desired location ON LEAD, stand there and wait without interacting with your dog until they eliminate then reward generously. Letting your dog go to the toilet off lead and alone they will usually get side tracked and forget what they were meant to do.

New Puppy?

Recognising signals

Times a puppy may need to toilet

- After waking up from a nap
- After a meal
- After (or during!) a play or interaction session with you or another animal

Signs a puppy or dog needs to toilet

- Sniffing the ground intently while walking in circles, wandering off

Confinement and setting up for success

When you are not able to actively supervise your puppy, they should be confined to a crate or den area for short periods. Imagine letting a toddler loose in the house without a nappy on!! Leaving a puppy unsupervised would have dire consequences!

Crate training and denning

Dogs in the wild like to keep their den areas clean, and domestic dogs are the same! They generally don't like to go to the toilet where they are sleeping. Crate training your puppy allows you to simulate this 'den' area,





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while giving you a handy management tool for the rest of your puppy's life. Remember that puppies need to be taught to use a crate and they should never be forced. Positive introduction is crucial. Refer to 'crate training a puppy or adult dog' info sheet. Remember to take your puppy to the toilet regularly if you are using a crate.

Similarly, a den can be any small room or area with a floor that is easy to clean e.g. ex pen/laundry/bathroom. This enclosure should contain your puppy's bed, toys, water and feed bowls

Place a few layers of newspaper or puppy pads for the toilet area on the opposite side to where the feed and water is. Once the puppy is using the newspaper you can enlarge the "den" area. Place the top newspaper (which is wet) on the bottom of the pile. The smell will encourage the puppy to use this area. The soiled papers can then be placed outside in the yard to encourage the puppy to 'toilet' in the area of your choice. Access to the rest of the house can be made slowly, once the puppy is reliable.

Pay attention!

You need to notice toileting signals and respond quickly before your puppy makes a mistake! Encourage your puppy to follow you outside to their toilet area, or you can pick them up gently. As soon as they have gone to the toilet, give them lots of calm praise. You can also say a word such as 'toilet'. Your puppy will eventually associate the word with the right action of urination or defecation.

Routine

Keeping to a set routine can be helpful. Set meal times and regular trips outside to toilet, and reward when your dog or puppy gets it right.

Whoops! How to deal with accidents

You must expect accidents occasionally. Young puppies lack the muscle control to 'hold it' in! Never punish the puppy by rubbing their nose in the 'accident', or scolding. Reprimanding your puppy will only confuse them as to what you require from them. If you catch your puppy in the act of toileting, don't reprimand - don't say a word. Just quickly lift them up and take them outside to the toilet area. If you reprimand your puppy, you will just end up causing stress and confusion, which makes sure they go when you are not around to scold them. You may end up with accidents behind furniture and under beds!

Prevent access to areas - if your puppy is attracted to a certain surface or area, the best thing you can do is to prevent access by using baby gates, crating or denning your puppy.

Clean up accidents with a non-ammonia based product e.g. BIO-ZET laundry powder. Using an ammonia based product such as bleach can attract dogs back to the site. An enzymatic cleaner breaks down the enzymes in the urine, helping to eliminate smell. You can also leave a bowl of clean water in that area or feed the dog the next meal in the same area.



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Vet visit?

If you feel your puppy or dog is toileting in excessive amounts or more often than usual, or it isn't a normal smell, colour or consistency, make sure you get them checked over by your vet.

Appeasing/excitement urination

Some puppies and older dogs will urinate because of excitement or anticipation of seeing their owner. Usually, puppies will grow out of this habit. With the older dogs, it is a little harder to control. Encourage the dog to be relaxed during greetings to lessen the excitement. Try to be calm yourself and keep comings and goings low key. Do NOT scold the dog.

Adult dogs

When adopting an adult dog, most are toilet trained but some are not. Even those who are trained may have learnt to go in places that are not acceptable to you, and you may need to re-teach a new place to toilet. Follow the steps above.

Reward!

Reward for doing the correct thing. Do not punish for mistakes - it is better to ignore and make it even easier for the dog to get it right next time so you can reward them for the correct response.

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