

SOUTH COAST VET CARE ~ ANIMAL MATTERS

Getting started With Puppy Toilet Training

When you bring a new puppy into your home there will be a period of adjustment. Your goals are to help your puppy to quickly bond to its new family, and to minimize the stress associated with leaving its mother, littermates and former home. If there are already dogs in the new home the transition may be a little easier as the puppy is able to identify with its own kind. However, most puppies, especially those obtained before 12 weeks of age, will form attachments almost immediately to the people and any other pets in the new home, provided that there are no unpleasant consequences associated with each new person and experience.

How do I prevent my puppy from doing damage or getting into mischief?

The rule of thumb for dog training is 'set the dog up for success'. Supervise the puppy at all times until it has learned what it is allowed to chew, and where it is supposed to eliminate. Keeping the puppy on a leash is an excellent way to keep it in sight, and to train it not to wander off. This is particularly helpful with a highly investigative puppy or for a very busy household.

At any time that the puppy cannot be supervised, such as throughout the night or when you need to go out, house it in a secure area. An escape-proof crate, a dog run, or collapsible pen are simple, highly effective, and most important, safe. The puppy could also be confined to a room that has been carefully dog-proofed. When selecting your dog's confinement area it is useful to consider a number of factors. The dog will adapt fastest to the new area if it is associated with rewards. Have the puppy enter the area for all its treats, toys and perhaps food and water. The area should have some warm, dry, comfortable bedding, and should never be used for punishment. It should be somewhere your pup can have some time out and alone time which can also help with separation anxiety. In fact, often the best area is the kitchen (so that this can also be the dog's feeding area) or a bedroom (so that this then becomes the dog's sleeping area, somewhere it can still be part of the family). Each time the puppy needs to be confined, it should first be well exercised and given an opportunity to eliminate. Another consideration in selecting the type of confinement area is how long you may need to leave the dog alone. Anytime the puppy will be left alone for longer than it can control its elimination, you must provide an area for elimination. A cage or crate could be used by owners that do not have to leave their puppies confined for longer than 2 or 3 hours.

What is the best way to punish my puppy for misbehavior?

Every effort should be made to avoid punishment for new puppies as it is generally unnecessary and can lead to avoidance of family members, sneaking off and out of view to eliminate at a time when bonding and attachment is critical. By preventing problems through confinement or supervision, plenty of trips outside to elimination are provided for all of the pup's needs, and setting up the environment for success, little or no punishment should ever be required. If a reprimand is needed, a verbal reprimand or

a loud noise such as clapping your hands is usually sufficient to distract a puppy so that you can then redirect the puppy to the correct behavior.

How can I prevent problems?

Supervise the puppy at all times that it is not confined to ensure that the puppy does not get itself into mischief, or cause damage to itself or the home. Leaving a leash attached is all that is usually needed to prevent or interrupt inappropriate behavior such as garbage raiding, chewing on household items, house-soiling, or wandering off into rooms or areas that are out of bounds. With the leash attached you can quickly correct other problems that might arise, such as nipping, play biting and jumping up. When the puppy cannot be supervised, confinement will be necessary.

What must I do to provide for my puppy's needs?

Chewing, play, exercise, exploration, feeding, social contact and elimination are basic requirements of all puppies. By providing appropriate outlets for each of these needs, few problems are likely to emerge. Puppies should be given chew toys that interest them and occupy their time.

When supervised, the owner can allow the pup to investigate and explore its new environment and can direct the puppy to the appropriate chew toys. Play, exercise, affection, training, and handling must all be part of the daily routine. New tasks, new routines, new people and new forms of handling can be associated with rewards to ensure success. And of course, the pup will need to be provided with an acceptable area for elimination and will need guidance until it learns to use the area.

How do I house train my puppy?

All it requires are a few basic rules to house train pups within a few days. This does not mean that the puppy will be able to be trusted to wander throughout the home without elimination. What the puppy should quickly learn is where it should eliminate and the consequences of toileting indoors when the owner is supervising.

- A.** Puppies have a strong urge to eliminate after sleeping, playing, feeding and drinking. Prepare to take your pup to its selected toileting area after each of these activities. In addition, although *some* pups can control themselves through the entire night, most will need to eliminate every 3 to 4 hours during the daytime. (At least). With each passing month, you can expect your puppy to control itself a little longer between needing to toilet. You should take your pup to the elimination area, on lead so that you can control where he/she goes and as soon they have been, put a word to it (eg: quickly, jury up or toilet) then lavishly praise and pat them. A few tasty food treats can also be given the first few times they manage to go in the right spot, and then intermittently thereafter. This teaches the puppy the proper place to eliminate and that going in that location is associated with rewards. Puppies can learn to eliminate when they hear the cue words. Always go outdoors with your puppy to ensure that it has eliminated and so that rewards can be given immediately upon completion and not when the dog comes back indoors as then it is too late. By leaving a small amount of faeces in this spot, it will encourage the puppy back to the same spot.
- B.** When indoors the puppy must be supervised so that you can see when it needs to go and immediately take it outdoors to the designated area. Should signs of circling, squatting, sneaking off, heading to the door occur, immediately take the dog to the area you wish for it to go, give

the cue words and reward the puppy when it eliminates. If the pup begins to eliminate indoors, use a verbal reprimand or clap your hands to intervene and immediately take the puppy outdoors to the proper site, so that it can complete the act. Remember it is you, not the pup that has made a mistake by not taking it out frequently enough. Rather than having to use punishment it is much better to always supervise the pup. One of the best techniques is to leave a lead attached.

- C. When you are not available to supervise, the pup should be confined to its confinement area. Be certain that he/she has had a chance to toilet and has had sufficient play and exercise before any lengthy confinement. If the area is small enough, such as a pen or crate, many puppies will have sufficient control to keep this area clean (within reason). This means that when you come to release the pup from confinement, it must be taken directly to its elimination area.

Why does my puppy refuse to eliminate in my presence, even when outdoors?

Puppies that are not supervised and rewarded for outdoor elimination, but are constantly being disciplined and punished for indoor elimination, may soon begin to fear to eliminate in all locations in your presence. These puppies do not associate the punishment with indoor elimination; they associate the punishment with the presence of the owners.

What do I do if I find some stool or urine inside?

There is no point in punishing or even pointing out the problem to the pup. Only if the puppy is in the act of elimination will it understand the consequences. In fact, it is not the puppy who has erred, it is the owner who has erred by not properly supervising. These mistakes will need to be cleaned thoroughly or the pup may return to the same area again. (A mixture of water and Biozet washing powder mixed in a spray bottle may be used. Do not use Ammonia based products as this may actually encourage them.)

How can I teach my puppy to signal that it needs to go out to eliminate?

By regularly taking the dog outdoors, through the same door, to the same site, and providing rewards for proper elimination, the puppy should soon learn to head for the door each time it has to go to the toilet. (Repetition is the key). If you recognize the signs of impending elimination and praise the puppy whenever it heads for the doorway, the behavior can be further encouraged. Puppies that have been interrupted or reprimanded on one or more occasions as they begin to eliminate indoors, may begin to try to sneak away, whine or show some form of anxiety, when they feel the urge to eliminate, but cannot escape from the owners sight. If you can pick up on these cues, and take the puppy directly outside, the puppy may consistently begin to show these signals when he or she needs to eliminate and may even begin to take you to the exit door.

When will I be able to trust my puppy to wander loose throughout the home?

Generally you will want your dog to have been error free around the house for about a month before you can begin to decrease your confinement and supervision. The first time you leave the puppy unsupervised should be just after taking the dog outdoors. Gradually increase the length of time that your dog is allowed to roam through the home without supervision. If the dog has been able to go unsupervised for a couple of hours without an 'accident', it might then be possible to begin going

out for short periods of time. Of course, if the dog still investigates and chews, then confinement and supervision may still be necessary.