



Dogs' Homes of Tasmania

Operated by the Tasmanian Canine Defence League.
Locations at Hobart, Devonport, & Burnie.

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Caring for Dogs~ Maintaining Health & Wellbeing

House Training your new Dog or Puppy

A guide to toilet-training without tears!



Reward-Based Training

The best and most reliable way to house train a puppy or dog is to provide frequent opportunity to toilet in the right place and then reward this behaviour immediately it occurs. Other methods may appear easier however this reward-based approach saves more time and energy in the long run.

Success is all about TIMING - predicting when a puppy or dog needs to toilet and rewarding when the right thing happens in the right place. Taking your dog/puppy outside regularly and enthusiastically praising and rewarding with food treats when the desired outcome is achieved, avoids giving your puppy the opportunity to make a mistake in the first place.

It's worth remembering that physically, puppies don't necessarily have reliable bladder and bowel control until around six months of age.

Timing is Everything

Take your dog/puppy outside soon after each meal and immediately they wake up from a nap.

These are predictable moments during the day when bowel and bladder are most full.

Prevent 'accidents' between times by taking your dog/puppy outside at regular intervals throughout the day. Go for a walk or have a play until the dog/puppy has eliminated. As he/she prepares to toilet, begin praising in a happy tone of voice and continue until the task is complete.

A food treat given immediately after elimination will reinforce to the dog/puppy that it has done the right thing and then he/she is more likely to repeat that desired behaviour - be patient; it can take time for the penny to drop!

What if I catch my dog in the act?

If you have the urge to smack with a rolled up newspaper—DON'T!

If you punish your puppy or dog when you catch it in the act of relieving inside, it will simply learn to relieve itself in secret. You will find tell-tale puddles where you least expect it. In this situation, it is best to gently but urgently take the dog outside saying....” outside, outside, outside...”

Although too late this time, it will help the dog to learn what we want and help prevent future mistakes.

Some owners mistakenly believe that pressing the dog's nose into its own waste will discourage it from doing it again. This form of punishment is more likely to frighten and confuse your dog and may even lead to a fear of toileting in your presence.

Punishment is not helpful in house-training. No matter how frustrated you may be, clean up the mess and concentrate on the steps to preventing another 'accident.'

What's wrong with paper-training?

Paper-training encourages puppies/dogs to eliminate on newspapers spread over the floor in a designated area of the home. This can lead to several problems.

Firstly, you may confuse the animal by teaching it twice what it needs to learn only once. When and if the dog learns to toilet on newspapers, it must then be retrained to toilet outside.

Secondly, you may unintentionally teach your dog that it is acceptable to toilet inside your home. Though some puppies stay on the paper, many 'miss' the paper boundaries. You may think your animal understands that it should go on the paper, but he/she may be learning that it is acceptable to eliminate anywhere in that area.

When hurrying outside to toilet your dog, it is important to go as calmly as possible despite the urgency! We don't want the dog to see being taken outside as a punishment. Being thrust roughly out into a big and frightening yard can be very confusing for a puppy. Predict your dog's need to toilet, praise and reward all outdoor toileting triumphs!

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