

CRATE TRAINING & HOUSEBREAKING SUGGESTIONS

Submissive (Excited) Urination

If your dog piddles when excited or when certain people approach him, he's not urinating on purpose as you might think. His body is reacting to a stressful or exciting situation. Do not correct the dog for urinating, as that will only make it worse. Instead, ignore the dog – no eye contact, no talking, no petting, etc., until the stress has subsided. If you can anticipate situations where submissive urination typically occurs, be proactive. Greet the dog outside, rather than inside the house. Also, try diverting the dog's attention by offering a piece of food or toy without looking at the dog, or tossing a ball for him. Be patient & your dog will outgrow it.

Marking/Leg-Lifting

Unaltered male dogs lift their legs to spray their urine higher & mark their territory. Excessive marking is often associated with dominant and/or aggressive behavior. In these dogs' minds, their territory can include the tree in the front yard, the tree down the block, the stop sign three blocks away, the door of the training center, the corner of your couch, your leg & the pillow on your bed. Marking is not related to housebreaking. A housebroken dog will mark in the house if he can get away with it!

Supervision in the house is necessary to resolving this issue, together with leadership exercises & obedience training. To help reduce marking outside, do not allow your dog to mark trees, bushes, posts, etc., away from home. When you go for a walk, stop & tell him to do his business as needed, but do not allow him to pee on everything he sees. In his own back yard, your dog can certainly pee where he chooses, provided it's in a bathroom area that you have designated. He does not need to mark the picnic table, the kids' toys, the deck, etc., unless you want him to.

If you catch your dog marking inappropriately, catch him in the act & discipline him in a manner that's appropriate for his age & temperament. Take him outside to his bathroom area, give him a minute to urinate, & then put him in his crate for a time out. Be certain to thoroughly clean the marked item or area with an enzyme cleaner such as Nature's Miracle.

Crate Training

We are firm believers in crate training for dogs. When properly introduced to a crate, your dog will love his crate. Our dogs will seek out their crates when they want to nap or chew on a favorite toy in peace. Your crate can be used to prevent housebreaking mistakes & destructive behavior while you're away from home. They're also useful for car travel. Did you ever consider what might happen to your dog if you were involved in a car accident & he was loose in the car?

To introduce a dog of any age to a crate: 1) Set it up in the family room, kitchen or bedroom & let the dog sniff it. 2) Toss in an old rug or towel that already has your dog's scent on it. Then toss in a tidbit of food or a toy. Be quiet & let the dog investigate it. If he goes into the crate, fine. If not, don't force him in. 3) When your dog is comfortable going in & out to get a tidbit or toy, wait until nap time, toss a tidbit in & shut the door once he's in. Turn a radio or TV on nearby & leave him in the crate for a short period (no other food or water inside). Most dogs will cry when first left in their crate. Most of the time, unrewarded behavior will extinguish itself. Ignore the fussing & your dog will figure out fussing doesn't do him any good. Go back & let him out ONLY after he's been quiet for a few minutes. If you find he's gone to sleep, leave him there a little while longer. Above all, be patient.

If your dog becomes hysterical while in the crate, you may have proceeded too quickly. If your dog is not hysterical, but barks & whines, try squirting him with water or banging on top of the crate & say "Quiet." After they're 6-8 months of age most dogs can spend up to 8-10 hours in a crate, provided they get plenty of exercise before & after confinement. Just be sure to increase their time inside slowly. There are a few dogs who have extra challenges getting used to their crates. Dogs who panic or become hysterical, even after a proper introduction to the crate, may need calming herbs or medication to help them adjust. Check with your veterinarian.

Housebreaking

Housebreaking a dog is an easy task, if you follow a few simple rules & understand your dog's urges. The keys to success are: 1) supervising the dog whenever he's in the house; 2) confining the dog to a crate or small, escape-proof corner of a room for sleeping & when you're not around to supervise him; & 3) putting the dog on a feeding, exercise & bathroom schedule.

1. While still living with their mother, the pups were taught to keep their den clean. In the whelping box, the pups were encouraged to go to the corner farthest away from mom to "do their business." By using this instinctive desire for cleanliness you can use an airline kennel or wire crate as your pup's den to help him learn control. (Crates are NOT instruments of torture!!! Dogs are pack & den animals. When properly introduced to a crate, dogs relish their private houses & go there to nap, to get away from the kids etc. Crates are also invaluable for travel--your pup's house goes into the motel room & in the car, or on the plane. Crate trained dogs are welcome everywhere!) If you cannot use a crate, you must block off a small corner of the kitchen or bedroom where the dog can be confined. There should just be enough room for the pup to stand up & turn around, & sleep on his side. If you buy an adult-size crate for a dog simply block off the back portion of the crate with a piece of plywood or box. Many of the newer wire crates come with movable panels that allow you to change the size of the crate as the dog grows. Make sure the dog cannot hurt himself with whatever you use to reduce the crate size.
2. Put a blanket/rug & sock or toy in the crate with the pup but no food or water. The pup should be in the crate: 1) at night to sleep, 2) during the day when no one is home & 3) whenever someone is home but unable to closely supervise the pup. The pup must also have a lot of time outside of the crate for socialization & handling but he must gradually earn the privilege of total freedom. This will come with diligence on your part. To introduce your pup to his crate, open the door & toss in his favorite toy or dog treat. Let him investigate. A few minutes later, toss another treat in the crate & put him in there with it. Use the command "Kennel." Close the door & walk away. Most pups will throw a little tantrum (crying, howling, etc.), the first time they're crated. That's normal. Ignore it for 5-10 minutes then go back & clap your hands loudly or rap on the top of the crate, then say "Quiet." Leave immediately, NEVER let the pup out of his crate unless he has been quiet for at least several minutes--otherwise you're teaching him that if he cries loudly enough he'll get out!
3. As soon as you let the pup out of his crate, immediately take him outside to eliminate. Always take him to the same corner of the yard, at first always on leash. Stand still & wait. When the pup eliminates, praise him with "Good Potty" or "Do Your Business" or "Good Dog" & then go inside or to another area of the yard for some play. You can help your dog learn to signal you that he needs to potty by hanging a bell from the door knob. Ring the bell each time you take him out. Soon, he'll learn to ring the bell!
4. Give the pup supervised freedom in the house after he's eliminated outside. The length of supervised freedom depends on the pup's age. Very young dogs may be out 20-30 minutes; older pups for 45 minutes or so. Supervised freedom means someone is always watching the pup out of one corner of his or her eye. Baby gates can be used to confine the dog to the same room of the house & moved around as you move. If the pup eliminates in the house--it's your fault! Don't blame him! Whenever the pup starts to sniff or circles immediately command "Outside" take him outside to the elimination corner. Give him his bathroom command stand still & wait.
5. Your goal is to prevent an accident in the house--not to correct the pup after the fact. If you find an accident in the house clean it up with an enzyme product such as Nature's Miracle & don't correct the pup. Don't give the pup too much freedom too fast.
6. If you must leave a very young dog (under 10 weeks or so) alone all day while you work you will need to alter the housetraining plan & paper train the dog until he is a bit older & can hold it for 8 hours. Confine the dog in an area that is large enough for his crate (leave the door open) & an equal amount of space for newspapers plus another equal space for food & water. Think of it as a triangle with one corner for sleeping (crate), one corner for elimination (papers), & one corner for eating. (Do not give the pup an entire room in the house!)

7. Until he gets older your pup will always need to eliminate at predictable times: 1) after waking from a nap 2) after eating and/or drinking 3) after a play session and, 4) after about 20-30 minutes of supervised freedom.
8. Write down & follow a dog training & housebreaking schedule seven days a week. Don't alter the pup's schedule just so you can sleep late on Saturday. Don't give the pup loads of attention all weekend long & then leave him alone 8 hours a day for the next five days. Here's a hypothetical schedule to use as starting point for an 8-week pup. (Make one for your family & lifestyle.)

Sample housebreaking & supervision schedule for a young puppy:

Time	Activity	Name
6:00 am	Get up, let pup out of crate & immediately outside to potty	Joe
6:15 am	Feed pup, followed by outside to potty	Joe
6:30 am	Back to crate with chew toy while Joe showers & dresses	Joe
7:15 am	Out of crate, outside to potty, then into kitchen while Joe eats breakfast	Joe
7:45 am	Back outside to potty, followed by short training session & walk or ball playing	Joe
8:00 am	Back to crate with chew toy while Joe goes to work	Joe
9:00 am	Out of crate, outside to potty, then into den while Jane does computer work	Jane
9:30 am	Alarm goes off to take pup outside to potty	Jane
9:35 am	Back to den for more supervised freedom while Jane does computer work	Jane
10:15 am	Alarm goes off to take pup outside to potty	Jane
10:20 am	Back to crate with chew toy while Jane works on the computer uninterrupted	Jane
1:00 pm	Out of crate, outside to potty, followed by short training session & walk or ball playing	Jane
1:30 pm	Feed pup, followed by outside to potty	Jane
1:35 pm – 4:00 pm	Supervised freedom in various rooms of the house where Jane is working, with 30 minute alarm reminders to take pup outside to potty	Jane
4:00 pm	Back to crate with chew toy while Jane runs errands	Jane
6:00 pm	Out of crate, outside to potty, followed by short training session & walk or ball playing	Joe
6:30 pm	Supervised freedom in kitchen while owners prepare & eats dinner (potty alarm reminders)	Joe & Jane
7:25 pm	Feed pup	Joe
7:30 pm	Outside to potty, then into living room for more supervised freedom & short training session (potty alarm reminders)	Joe
9:30 pm	Outside to potty, followed by long walk so pup will be tired & sleep through the night	Joe
10:00 pm	Back to living room for quiet time before bedtime	Jane & Joe
10:30 pm	Outside to potty, then everyone goes to bed – dog sleeps in crate in bedroom	Jane

9. As the pup gets older, his naps in the crate during the day will be replaced with supervised freedom & the time between bathroom breaks will increase. The pup will gradually be allowed the freedom of two rooms, then three rooms & so on. I personally do not give my dogs complete freedom of the house while I'm home until they are about 6 months old. When I'm gone they're crated until they're at least 18 months old. This prevents chewing, digging, barking, etc. while I'm gone.
10. Students often ask us about dog doors that allow the pup to come & go from house to yard. Dog doors can make it harder to housebreak a dog because the door allows him to go outside whenever he wants. You won't know when the pup does his business or just goes out to play. Dog doors also make it harder for dogs to learn to "hold it" for longer periods of time. If you do choose to install a dog door, wait until your pup gets older (6-8 months old) & make sure the outside area is securely fenced & locked. We like dog doors that are installed in screen (storm) doors. This allows the owner to fully secure the house (shut & lock the primary door) when he leaves, yet allow use of the dog door when he's home.