



## Toilet training your dog

### RSPCA COMPANION ANIMALS PET CARE FACTSHEET



Environment

Dogs are generally clean animals and will usually choose to move away from their sleeping area in order to urinate and defecate. However, it is important that when you bring a new puppy into your home, one of the first training exercises you embark on is housetraining. Every puppy needs to have constructive lessons in basic control and such training exercises are part of an important bonding experience that is the foundation to your relationship with your dog. Initially, you will have to build your routine around your puppy's needs, and these are reliably predictable when dogs are very young.



Diet

If toilet training an adult dog that may not have been trained correctly in the past, though the stages remain the same, the process may take longer. This can depend on the age and experience of your individual dog. For example, reasons your dog may toilet indoors include stress in the household or anxiety about being left alone and patience is important to treat any behaviour issues. If you think your dog is suffering from a behaviour problem, seek advice from your vet to rule out any underlying health problems, who may then refer you to a behavioural expert.

#### HOW TO TOILET TRAIN YOUR DOG

When training a puppy or dog to toilet in an appropriate place, you should ensure that he/she has frequent opportunities to do so during the day - this provides you more opportunities to teach your dog about where it is appropriate to go to the toilet.

Puppies need to toilet regularly and should be taken outside:

- after every meal
- on waking
- after play or exercise
- after any excitement e.g. visitors to the home
- at least every hour depending upon the puppy's age.



Behaviour

There are signs in your dog's behaviour that will enable you to predict when he/she will need to go to the toilet. For example, they may become fidgety, often sniffing around and begin to circle before squatting. Times to look out for these signs are after naps, after feeding and after he/she has been left alone! When you recognise that your dog is thinking about going to the toilet, there are a few steps to follow<sup>3</sup>:

- Always go with your dog into the garden or correct place so that you are there to reward the successful actions. This will tell him/her that this is the right place to 'go'. Always try to take your dog to the same place so he/she learns the route.



Company



Health and welfare



- As your dog begins to toilet, use a toileting command that he/she can then associate with correct behaviour; for example, 'be quick!' However, patience is important if your dog is initially distracted.
- Going to the toilet in the correct place should be rewarded immediately with lots of praise, a treat or play. Reward-based training in this way also helps build a good relationship between you and your dog and make him/her feel secure, which will be useful in future training.
- Walk your dog around for a bit longer before going back inside or initiate some play. This will ensure that he/she does not learn that relieving themselves ends time outside and that your dog does not hold on to the last minute in order to extend playtime.
- If you see your dog going to the toilet in the wrong place you should interrupt him/her in a way that does not punish them. This is important as otherwise your dog may learn that it is only safe to go when you are not around, which will have a negative effect on housetraining. Take him/her to the correct place and give lots of praise when going to the toilet is performed there.
- If you find an accident after the event, you should never punish your dog – this may cause your dog to become confused, as he/she will not associate the punishment with the earlier accident.
- Carefully clean all areas your dog has previously soiled using a warm solution of biological washing powder, (for example, mixing one part biological washing powder to nine parts water before rinsing with water), which will remove all traces of the smell from your house. This will reduce the chance of your dog using this area again.
- Toilet training should be fun and rewarding for you both! Continue to accompany him/her and reward your dog's actions with lots of praise to reinforce his/her behaviour in a positive way. If training is continued in this way, your dog will eventually begin to ask to go outside to toilet.

If training is unsuccessful or you are having difficulty, get your dog checked by a vet to rule out any form of illness or injury that could be causing a behaviour problem. Your vet may then refer you to a clinical animal behaviourist that should have a combination of appropriate qualifications, up to date knowledge, skills and experience and treat behaviour in a way which doesn't put the welfare of the dog at risk.

#### OTHER POSSIBLE LINKS:

- Dog welfare needs [webpage](#)
- Find a vet [webpage](#)
- Find an animal behaviourist [webpage](#)



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