



Cardinal Animal Hospital

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Housebreaking Made EASY

Congratulations on your new bundle of fur! You may want to start acquiring some of the items below as you begin to “potty-train” your new puppy:

- A CRATE (KENNEL)
- OLD TOWELS FOR BEDDING
- PUPPY FOOD
- COLLAR (not a choke chain)
- LEASH
- BRUSH, COMB AND GROOMING SUPPLIES
- PET-ODOR REMOVER

The thought of housebreaking a puppy invokes groans from some people and induces anxiety attacks in others. However, housebreaking does not need to be a difficult or painful chore. With the right approach and some consistent efforts, your puppy can be housebroken faster than you ever dreamed possible. The keys to quick success are a training crate, a watchful parent and a consistent plan of action.

The Crate, A Safe Haven

Before going any further, it is necessary to dispel any horrible thoughts of putting your dog, a trusted member of the family and a faithful companion into a cage. Notice the word ‘cage’ is a four-lettered word. Forget the word cage. From now on, think of using the word ‘crate’ and think of this word as the dog’s very own den or safe haven. Since canine species are den animals, perhaps that is why the family dog likes to relax under the kitchen table, under a bed, or any similar space close to where the family spends a lot of time. The crate can provide this sought after atmosphere of a den, contributing to the dog’s sense of security. Also, providing only a rug, mat or an open dog bed during unsupervised times gives a puppy a lot of freedom to roam and possibly encounter hazardous situations or treasured possessions. With appropriate bedding in a crate, the puppy is protected from lures such as electrical cords or new shoes. Since the crate can be used to help eliminate the unsupervised roaming, the use of the crate helps protect both your possessions and your dog.

Introducing the Crate

Your puppy’s first experience with its crate should be pleasant. Place the crate on the floor and allow the puppy time to sniff around the crate. Prop the door open and place a few treats just inside the door. As the puppy develops more courage, toss the treats to the back of the crate so that the puppy must go inside to retrieve the goodies. Also, line the crate floor with newspapers, blankets or towels. When the puppy is comfortable in the crate, close the door and leave it shut for a few minutes. Let the dog out without ceremony. Repeat the process several times, gradually extending the length of the closed-door sessions. However, if the puppy is hesitant about entering the crate, DO NOT force the puppy through the crate door. Try feeding the puppy in the crate for a day or two and cheerfully chat with the dog while it is eating. Lure the puppy into the crate with its food dish, then put the dish at the front of the crate. The puppy will not feel trapped if it faces the open crate door. So when the puppy is comfortable in its crate, it is time to take advantage of all the wonderful uses for this marvelous invention.

Housebreaking With A Crate

Following this easy schedule will help housebreaking be as easy as falling in love with your puppy!

MORNING: The “first thing” to do in the morning may have to be done earlier than you had in mind! At the first peep, whine or bark in the morning, open the crate door and immediately lead the puppy to the exact spot that is wanted for the dog to continuously use for elimination. Also, try to stand and let the puppy wander about on its leash, remembering, this is not a walk but a “business trip”. During this outing, use a term you have chosen to use each time for elimination. Some common terms are “potty”, “go pee” or the one that makes some people feel better on snowy mornings, “hurry-up”. Once you have chosen a word or phrase make sure everyone in the family uses it. Also, as the puppy piddles or has a bowel movement, reward the puppy with positive words, such as “good dog” then take the puppy back inside. As the puppy matures, instead of going back inside, a walk could be started or free play in a fenced in yard could begin.

If the puppy messes in the crate before waking you, DO NOT scold the puppy. Just be sure to set the alarm for 15 or 20 minutes earlier and also make sure the puppy relieves itself before going into the crate at night. Changing the feeding schedule and removing the water dish a little earlier may also help. Please remember that the goal is prevention, not punishment.

As for breakfast, allow for 15 to 20 minutes for the puppy to dine before removing the dish. Take the puppy back outside to the same spot and if no interest is shown then play or walk in the vicinity of the spot, continuously returning to that particular place. It is important to be there to verbally praise the puppy when it does use that spot.

DAYTIME: Be sure to monitor your puppy’s activities throughout the day. When the puppy sniffs, walks in circles and/or appears anxious, it is time to go to the “potty spot” with the puppy. The success to housebreaking depends on the quickness of the response to the puppy’s cues. Eventually, the puppy will try to go to the “potty spot” on its own. Until the puppy has mastered the use of the spot, be very attentive to the puppy’s actions and try to help it refrain from making a “mistake”.

If the puppy must be left alone while you are in the house or if you plan on being gone for only a few hours, place the crate in a restricted area, such as a kitchen or bathroom, with a gate across the door but leave the crate door open. Turn a radio on low (dogs have super hearing) and put some safe toys in the crate. Also, be certain the room is free of anything that may endanger the puppy or be hazardous to the puppy if ingested.

However, if you plan on being gone for more than two hours, confine the puppy in the restricted area previously described such as in a kitchen or bathroom with the same precautions taken. Please ask your veterinarian for an opinion on how long your puppy can be expected to go without urinating or defecating, then decide whether or not the crate is an option for use during the amount of time you plan on being away. When you return home, immediately take the puppy to its “spot”.

BEDTIME: A young puppy’s last meal for the day should be before 8:00p.m. Follow that with drinks of water. After that final drink, remove the water bowl. Before putting the puppy in its crate for bedtime, be sure the puppy has gone to its elimination spot and used it. After saying goodnight to your puppy there could be some whines or yipping from the little one. Refrain from punishment and/or any verbal acknowledgement for the fussing and instead rest assured that the puppy will eventually fall asleep since the puppy has been fed, given water and allowed its final elimination for the evening.

By adhering to a consistent schedule you can housebreak your puppy within a very short amount of time. Continue to monitor the puppy’s actions for several months. If the puppy soils in the house, be sure to clean the area immediately with a commercial odor-eliminator or a solution of vinegar and water. If the puppy is allowed to “mark” places in the house, the puppy will continuously return to mark that spot. So with your consistent and attentive efforts in the beginning, hopefully you and your puppy can have long lasting results and an enjoyable time together in the home that you now share.

Again, congratulations on your new puppy!

We hope this information on housebreaking will be helpful.

Our professionals here at Cardinal Animal Hospital will continue striving to provide outstanding care for you and your pet.

Thank you for your business and please contact us if you have any further questions or concerns.