

House-Training Basics for Dogs of All Ages

KEY CONCEPTS AND EFFECTIVE TRAINING STEPS FOR SUCCESSFUL HOUSE-TRAINING

You've just brought home a new puppy (or adult dog) and it's now time to teach this wonderful ball of joy where the proper place to go potty is. "Hmm, what is the best way to do this?" you ask. Well, there are a couple of ways you can help guide your new pup in the right direction. The techniques aren't complicated, however, it just takes some **good observational** skills, **patience**, and **consistency** to help you all reach your goals.

Key points to help you achieve success with house-training:

- ***Understand the needs and species-specific habits of your dog.*** Triggers that will stimulate your dog to relieve him or herself include scent, surface texture (or "substrate"), other dogs eliminating or marking, and just "needing to go." As humans we all have our preferences and our dogs are no different. Taking the time to train your dog to eliminate on all types of surfaces can help them adapt to changes both within the confines of his or her new residence, as well as locations your dog will most likely frequent throughout his or her life. No matter the age of your dog, he or she will still need to be taught what is expected, especially since we are asking them to adapt to our human customs.
- ***Understand when your dog is more likely to have to go potty, and how he or she communicates the need to go.*** The most common times are after eating or drinking (about 30 minutes) and upon waking up from sleeping or prolonged periods of rest. Being able to read your dog's body language and vocal cues is important, especially during those atypical moments. A few of the more general signals to watch for would be whining or whimpering during nighttime hours (or if he or she hasn't gone yet), sudden onset of wandering off to another area without an apparent reason, sniffing (especially if he or she begins to circle around), standing, sitting and scratching at the door.
- ***Determine what your own needs are.*** Will you be asking your dog to eliminate in very specific locations such as training pads and the yard, or just "outside" in general? Does your dog have free access to an entire yard or will he or she only be given access when taken out for walks? Will you need someone else to take your dog out because of your schedule?
- ***Set your dog up for success through management of his or her environment.*** If you're uncertain or know for sure your dog hasn't eliminated, keeping him or her on leash tethered to you allows for you to keep a watchful eye while

preventing him or her from wandering off. The leash, along with crates and other forms of confinement can aid in preventing mishaps, especially when you cannot monitor your dog's behavior.

- ***Be consistent!*** A concentrated, diligent effort on your part provides steady learning while achieving your overall goals more rapidly. If your dog is rewarded for eliminating in the desired place, he or she will begin to associate the trend of going outside (or where you are training him or her to go) with being the better choice, and therefore more likely to choose that one, versus one that doesn't provide any extra bonuses.
- ***Help your dog generalize this much-needed behavior.*** Whether you are in your own home, visiting friends' houses, or other public places with restrictions, you will need to take the time to teach your dog where the appropriate location to go is. It's just like when you go to a new place and you have to ask where the restroom is. Just because a dog knows where to go in one location, doesn't always mean he or she will know where to go in a new location. All dogs, no matter the age and training history, need to be shown where the "bathroom" is whenever they arrive at a new location. *Note:* keep in mind that both males and females might "mark" in locations outside of his or her own home. This is usually related to the scent of other animals. Help prevent your own dog from wandering off and sniffing corners of walls, furniture, carpets, and sleeping locations of other animals by keeping a watchful eye on your dog.
- ***Reward your dog generously whenever he or she makes the desired choice.*** Petting, praise, "happy talk," and yummy food treats will encourage your dog to repeat this sought after behavior. The more you reward your dog for eliminating where you want him or her to go, the more likely he or she will choose that location again. A simple plan is to walk your leashed dog to an area where you want him or her to go, wait until he or she does, then reward with treats, petting and praise! You can also use off-leash play and/or free access in the house as an additional reward!
- ***Never punish your dog if he or she happens to eliminate in a forbidden area.*** Punishment only focuses on behaviors you don't want, and does nothing to teach your dog where you want him or her to go. Plus, as a side effect, it can train your dog to be fearful of going to the bathroom in front of you.

Additional Information to Keep in Mind When House-Training Your Dog:

First, recognize the physical limits of your dog including young pups who are still developing their bladder muscles as well as senior dogs that might need assistance.

Younger puppies may need to eliminate every 2-4 hours when they are awake, lively and active. However, they can usually restrain themselves for longer periods during the night, and other times of sleep. Senior dogs may have physical limitations and other health related issues that result in you having to go back to the basics of house-training.

General rule of thumb for calculating time frames:

- Puppies can typically hold their urine in amount of time by adding their age in months plus one. EX: 3 month old puppy can hold it for 4 hours (3 months, plus 1 = 4). *This means your puppy will most likely need to be taken outside to eliminate during the night.*
- A 16 - 18 week old puppy can typically hold it for five hours.
- Adults: 6-8 hours during the day, and eight to ten hours overnight.

Note: these are averages, please use them as guidelines. Diet, water intake, medications, overall health, and activity level each play a role in how often your puppy or adult dog will need to eliminate.

Basic House-Training Steps for Puppies and Adult Dogs:

- Escort your *leashed* dog to a preferred location, wait for him or her to eliminate, as soon as he or she does reward with petting, praise, yummy treats and off-leash freedom (if in a safe place) or free-time inside your home. If you've waited for ten or so minutes, and he or she hasn't gone, keep your dog tethered to you, in your lap (if size of your dog warrants this) or put them back in his or her confined area. Then offer your dog the opportunity again after 15 or 20 minutes.
- Manage your dog and your environment! If you're uncertain whether your dog has to go potty or you're unable to keep him or her under you watchful eyes, keep your dog tethered to you or in crate or other type of confined area to avoid accidents.
- Provide adequate opportunities for your dog to go to the bathroom, while acknowledging the specific needs he or she may have.

- Limit access for your dog to wander if they are in locations with no access to a bathroom area.
- Learn to read your dogs body language and vocalization cues for when he or she does need access to eliminate.
- *Finally, reward behaviors you like and want! You'll get more of them!*

About The Inquisitive Canine

The Inquisitive Canine is dedicated to empowering dog guardians to create better relationships with their dogs.

Inquisitive Canine Dog Training Services: Joan is known for her ability to facilitate success with her local dog training clients in the Ventura, Santa Barbara and Los Angeles area.

Virtually Inquisitive Online Dog Training: Joan's virtual dog training services offer dog guardians across the world with the opportunity to benefit from Joan's expertise and common sense dog training philosophy.

It's never too early or too late to start reinforcing the habits you want your dog to have—for life. We can help you better understand your dog so you can learn how to positively reinforce the behaviors you want from your dog, while limiting and preventing inappropriate habits.

Joan Mayer, *Dog Trainer, Human-Canine Relationship Coach*

Joan is a Certified Professional Dog Trainer (CPTD-KA) and founder of the Inquisitive Canine. Her training methods empower dog owners with a rewarding education designed to help them further develop and enhance their everyday relationships with their dogs. Her love-of-dog training approach focuses on methods that highlight the importance of understanding canine behavior. Her coaching tips and advice are designed to teach dogs through techniques that reward both owner and dog.

Joan teaches a series of dog training classes along with special workshops on dog behavior at Ventura Community College Education (VCCE). She is also the author of the popular doggie advice column *Dear Inquisitive Canine*, which is syndicated nationwide.

Joan Hunter Mayer, CTC, CPDT-KA
2159 Palma Drive, Suite D, Ventura, California 93003
Tel: 805.650.8500 E-mail: joan@theinquisitivecanine.com
www.inquisitivecanine.com



Joan is a Professional Member of the Association of Professional Dog Trainers (APDT), Affiliate Member of the International Association of Animal Behavior Consultants (IAABC), and American Kennel Club "Canine Good Citizen" Evaluator.