The Potty Training 101

Everything you need to know to Teach your Dog When and Where to Potty



Introduction:

Welcome to Potty training 101!

Bringing a new puppy into your home is an exciting and wonderful experience, filled with moments of laughter, play, and unconditional love. However, along with everything good that a puppy brings to your home, there also comes the challenge of teaching puppy where their appropriate elimination spot is.

It is crucial to start potty training your puppy as soon as possible. Potty training correctly from the start can set the foundation for a lifetime of good potty behaviour. In this book we will cover all of the basics and essentials required to teach your new family member everything that they need to know to ensure a smooth and successful potty training experience.

In this guide, we'll explore the fundamentals of understanding your puppy's needs, creating a positive environment, establishing a routine, and employing positive reinforcement techniques. Whether you're a first-time puppy parent or looking to refine your training methods, this guide is here to help you navigate the challenges and celebrate the successes of puppy potty training.

Remember, patience and consistency are the keys to success. Good luck on your potty training journey!

Feel free to reach out to us if you hit any roadblocks and we would be happy to help you navigate them!



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Chapter 1: Understanding Puppy Potty Training

1.1 How long does potty training take?

Potty training is the process of teaching your pup where and when it is appropriate to toilet. Early training is key to preventing undesirable habits and establishing a strong foundation for future behaviour. You can start training your puppy from the day that you bring them home, although very young puppies might struggle due tot heir bladder muscles being too weak to fully control just yet. It is my experience that most puppies can be fully potty trained by around 12 weeks, although some may take longer than this. The bladder is fully developed by about 6 months, so some puppies may struggle and have accidents on occasion until this point. I would find this to be the exception, rather than the rule, however, and if your puppy is still having accidents at 4 months old, it is important to evaluate the various principles laid out in this book to confirm that you are meeting their needs sufficiently so as to give them the best shot at successful potty training.

1.2 Patience and Consistency

Before delving into the practical aspects of potty training, it's crucial to embrace two fundamental principles: patience and consistency. Puppies are learning about the world around them, and accidents are inevitable. It is important to remember that your puppy is only a baby, and is learning about a very overwhelming world. Potty training usually comes on the heels of major upheaval in your puppy's life, so some pups may take a little longer than others to grasp it fully. Having patience with them in this journey is paramount to ensuring success, as frustration and negative experiences can actually set your puppy back and prevent effective potty training.

Consistency is equally important. Dogs thrive on routine, and a consistent schedule helps them predict when they should expect bathroom breaks. Consistency in your reactions and expectations also helps your puppy understand the rules, making the learning process smoother.



Chapter 2: Setting the Stage for Success

2.1 Selecting the Ideal Potty Spot

Identifying a designated potty spot is a critical step in the training process. Choose an area outside that is easily accessible and consistently use the same spot. This helps your puppy associate the location with the act of eliminating waste. Using the same spot every time also allows you to keep elimination messes to one area in the garden, and also prevents your puppy from becoming overly distracted by novel things, which can cause them to forget about potty training until they get back inside, resulting in an accident.

For apartment dwellers or those without immediate outdoor access, create an indoor potty area using some astroturf with training pads underneath, or a designated litter box. This allows your puppy to develop the habit of using a specific location for elimination, promoting consistency.



2.2 Necessary Supplies for Training

Equipping yourself with the right tools is essential for successful potty training. Here are some supplies that can aid the process:

- **Potty Spot:**
  If you're training indoors, use some Astroturf with training pads underneath or a litter box to create a designated elimination area. Please **DO NOT** use puppy pads by themselves. This can create confusion with the dog, whereby they think that anything that feels like puppy pads underfoot is fair game for elimination (ie: your carpets and mats). Having the astroturf on top will prevent this.

- **Collar/Lead:**
  A leash is invaluable for guiding your puppy to the designated potty spot and maintaining control during outdoor bathroom breaks to prevent them from becoming too distracted.

- **Treats:**
  Positive reinforcement is a powerful motivator. Use small, tasty treats to reward your puppy for successful bathroom breaks.

- **Cleaning Supplies:**
  Accidents are inevitable, and prompt cleaning is crucial to prevent repeat offences. Have pet-friendly cleaning supplies on hand to address accidents effectively, preferably something with an enzymatic cleaner to remove the urea from the area. Avoid product with bleach or ammonia, as these can smell like urine and can prompt repeat mistakes in the area.



- **Crate/Puppy Pen**
  Having somewhere to place your puppy when you cannot be watching them is hugely beneficial in potty training them. Leaving them unsupervised in the house is a recipe for accidents to happen, and unwanted chewing behaviour to occur.



Chapter 3: Potty Schedule and Routine

3.1 Potty Frequency

Young puppies generally have to eliminate every 60-90 minutes. It is important that they have frequent access to the desired potty spot, so as to avoid accidents as much as possible. Puppies also thrive on routine, so establishing a consistent schedule will help your puppy understand when to expect potty time.

There are a number of times when it is always a good idea to take your puppy out:

- **First thing in the morning when you wake up**
- **When puppy wakes after nap time**
- **After food/water**
- **Before and after play sessions**
- **Before bedtime**

Consistently timing bathroom breaks helps reduce accidents and reinforces the association between the designated potty spot and the act of elimination.



3.2 Feeding Schedules and Bathroom Breaks

Monitoring your puppy's elimination pattern after feeding can help you to predict when they may need to go out. Having specific feeding times at the same time each day can help this hugely. Try to avoid free-feeding (leaving food down all day), as it makes predicting bathroom breaks more challenging, and makes training more difficult as your pup is never really hungry. Monitor your puppy's water intake, especially in the evening, to reduce the likelihood of nighttime accidents. Remember, puppies typically need to relieve themselves shortly after drinking water.

Chapter 4: Praise and Punishment

4.1 Dealing with Accidents

So what do you do when your puppy has an accident in the house?

Generally, puppies need feedback on their actions within 3 seconds of the event occurring for them to actively link the event and the consequences.

For this reason, if you find a puddle or poop inside your house, but didn't see your puppy actively eliminating, there is nothing to do but clean it up and vow to be more observant and attentive in the future. Avoid punishments like rubbing puppy nose in their excrement, or scolding/ punishing puppy. They will not make the link to their accident and it could damage your relationship with them in the future.



If you see your puppy actively eliminating inside the house, interrupt them by clapping your hands or making a loud noise. If they stop a the loud noise, quickly take them outside to their elimination spot and spend some time with them outside to encourage them to eliminate again. Lots of praise if they do. If you make the loud noise and they continue to eliminate, let them finish and then take them outside anyways for a few minutes to help them make the link in the future. Clean it up once you come back inside. There is no point carrying them outside as they are peeing, except to provide you with a line of urine to clean, rather than just a puddle. Waiting until they are done and then taking them outside gives them the same message, while leaving you a more contained mess to clean up.

Avoid scolding or punishing your puppy for accidents, as this can create fear and anxiety, resulting in your puppy still having accidents inside, but hiding away from you when they do. Instead, focus on creating an environment where your puppy feels safe to express its natural behaviours. Trust is the foundation of a strong human-canine relationship, and a trusting puppy is more likely to follow your guidance willingly.



4.2 Rewarding Success

Positive reinforcement is a powerful tool in shaping your puppy's behaviour. When your puppy successfully eliminates in the designated potty spot, immediately offer praise, affection, and treats. Positive reinforcement creates a positive association between the act of elimination and receiving rewards, motivating your puppy to repeat the behaviour again in the future. Timing is important here, so that your puppy understands exactly what they are being rewarded for.

Keep treats small and tasty, and deliver them just after your puppy has finished eliminating in the desired spot. Consistency in reinforcement is crucial, reinforcing the connection between the action and the reward.

Do ensure though, that you aren't becoming overly excited and rambunctious with your praise. This can sometimes startle your puppy and actually result in them interpreting your praise as a negative thing. Keep praise calm and gentle, and pair it with a tasty treat. It's only positive reinforcement if your puppy finds it a positive experience, so keep an eye on how they feel about what you are offerring to reward them.



Chapter 5: Recognising Puppy’s Potty Signs

Understanding your puppy's body language is crucial for effective supervision. Recognising signs of potty urgency allows you to act proactively and guide your puppy to the designated spot. Common signs include:

- ***Restlessness:*** Pacing or appearing uneasy may indicate a need to eliminate.
- ***Sniffing or Circling:*** These behaviours often precede elimination and can be cues to take your puppy outside. Tail is usually raised when this behaviour occurs.
- ***Whining or Pawing at the Door:*** If your puppy exhibits these signs, it may be signalling the need for a bathroom break.

By staying attuned to your puppy's behaviour, you can respond promptly and reinforce positive bathroom habits.



Chapter 6: Rules for Success

There are a number of things that you can do to give yourself the best chance of success with potty training:

1. **Ensure that your puppy is supervised as often as possible.**

    - If you can't be actively supervising your puppy, place them into a crate/playpen, or you can pop them outside if your garden is contained and allows it.

    - You can also keep your puppy tethered to you using a house line, which is in essence a lead that you can tie onto your clothing or onto a nearby object to limit your puppy's movement if you can't have direct eyes on them.

    - This allows you to catch the moments that your puppy may make a mistake, increasing the chance of being able to correct them for an accident inside and redirect them outside, as well as making it more likely that you will see their toileting cues and let them out in time.

2. **Limit the amount of space that your puppy has access to in the house**

    - Close doors to rooms that you don't want your puppy alone in. Not only will this prevent chewing on inappropriate items, but it will also prevent your puppy from eliminating in areas without you seeing them. Practice makes permanent, so the more than you can prevent this behaviour, the easier your potty training journey will become.

    - Use baby gates/stair gates to further limit your puppy's access to the house until they are potty trained and their chewing is improved.

3. **Ensure that you are taking your puppy outside 8-10 times per day.**

    - If you take your puppy outside and they don't eliminate, bring them back inside and try again 10-15 minutes later.

    - If you cannot take them out this often, for whatever reason, placing them into a pen/crate with an area for sleeping and an area for going toilet until you get back can be a good idea, or place them in an enclosed area outside if the weather permits.

4. **Take your puppy out for potty breaks on lead.**

    - This prevents your puppy from having too much freedom outside which can result in them becoming distracted and not focusing on going potty

5. **Put Wee's and Poo's on command.**

    - You can do this by taking your pup outside and asking them to "make a wee", and praising when they do. Praise by saying "Good Wee!" And repeating this a few times. You can do the same for a poo. This is great for when out on walks, and also if your pup ever needs a vet visit. It's also helpful if the weather is bad, to prompt your pup for what needs to be done when you put them outside.

6. **Use Positive Reinforcement**

    - After your puppy eliminates outside, reward them in a way that they enjoy. Some puppies can find overexcitement aversive and can avoid going potty when you are around in the future as a result, so keep things calm and positive.

7. **Don’t some in straight away!**

    - Once your puppy eliminates outside, spend some time outside with them for a few minutes afterwards.

    - Some puppies love being outside, so being taken inside straight away after eliminating can feel like a punishment.

    - These puppies start to hold their bladders so that they can spend more time outside and if their owner takes them in before they have eliminated, they will often eliminate inside shortly after being bought back inside.

8. **Do not use puppy pads!**

    - Puppy pads can confuse your puppy, as you are trying to teach them that it is acceptable to eliminate inside when it’s actually not.

    - If your puppy becomes accustomed to using puppy pads, they can be difficult to remove later, and your puppy may extrapolate puppy pads to other similar surfaces, such as carpets and mats.

    - If you want your puppy to eliminate inside, place some astroturf over the puppy pad, or use a litter box with sand.

9. **Ensure that your puppy is getting enough sleep!**

    - Like toddlers, tired puppies make bad decisions and don’t listen to their body. Make sure that your pup is getting enough sleep to help prevent accidents.

10. Patience and Consistency is Key!

- Potty training takes time. Remember that they are just a baby and have only actually been alive for a few months. Be patient and consistent, and your efforts will eventually pay off. Have a chat to your trainer if you feel like you're doing everything right, but are still having limited success.



Chapter 7: Conclusion

A Clean and Happy Home with a Well-Trained Puppy

Potty training your puppy requires dedication, patience, and consistency. By understanding your puppy's needs, setting the right environment, and using positive reinforcement, you can successfully guide your furry friend towards becoming a well-behaved and house-trained companion. Remember, every accident is a learning opportunity for both you and your puppy. Celebrate the successes, remain patient during the challenges, and enjoy the journey of building a strong bond with your canine companion.