

A Quick Guide to...Successful Toileting/ Housetraining

Whether you have a puppy, or an older rescue, teaching dogs to toilet in the right place is really important. **Dogs don't instantly know where to go.** Although they prefer not to soil their sleeping, food and water areas, if they have a full bladder or bowels and are left too long, or become stressed and need to go instantly, then they will toilet wherever they are.

If there is a change in behaviour e.g. weeing more frequently, or their poo is softer or watery, **they need a check up at the vets** as they may need medication (for a UTI or bacterial infection in the gut).

The best way to train any behaviour is to **reward wanted behaviour** – toileting in the areas you want them to go in, toileting on cue, and learning to ask to go out.

Reward everything that happens outside

Every wee and poo that happens in the garden should be rewarded with praise and a tasty treat.

Every wee and poo that happens on walks should be rewarded with praise.

Every wee and poo that happens after a toileting cue e.g. 'busy busy', should be rewarded with praise and a tasty treat.

Observation and planning are the keys to success

Take them out regularly into the garden/ yard/ safe area near your home (for puppies this may even be every 20mins when they are awake), so you can reward them more.

Let them out if they 'ask' (e.g. ring a bell/s, bark once, look at you, wander to the door).

You need to observe, supervise and be close to them, or you won't be able to reward them.

If it's raining, go out with a brolly

It's important for you to show that toileting outside can be done in all weathers. Go with them so you can reward them.

If they don't like the rain, build a lean-to toileting area

Some dogs dislike the rain to such an extent that it makes toilet training really hard. Often the best solution is to create a dry area for toileting, perhaps with some fake grass that can be cleaned.

Supervision and containment

When they are inside, you need to be observant for changes in their behaviour that might indicate they need to wee or poo. This might be waking up, being distracted, becoming over-excited, sniffing and circling etc.

If you can't supervise closely, leave them somewhere safe where accidents can easily be cleaned up e.g. hard flooring, in a pen with puppy pads (i.e. not on carpet!).

Bells/ button

You can train puppies and dogs to make a sound when they need to go out. This might be pushing a button or bell with their paw, or moving a set of hanging bells with their nose. But for this to work you need to be close enough to hear it, and to be able to let them out quickly. Take the button/ bells away if you're not around.

Do not punish them for accidents

Telling a dog off for toileting in the wrong place increases stress, increases anxiety, decreases trust, and can result in more frequent accidents or a dog hiding away to toilet. Just clean up accidents as thoroughly as possible, using a product that will break down the enzymes in the wee (so they don't return to that spot), and take them out more regularly.

If they have to be left for longer, use pee-pads

Although you might want your puppy/ dog to hold on for several hours, they might not be ready to do that yet. Some may never be able to (depending how long you are leaving them for). Pads can either be placed directly on the floor, or in large cat litter boxes (or trays you can get from garden centres for larger dogs). Reward your puppy/ dog for using the pads.

Dog doors

If you're not able to be around to let them out, fitting a dog door can help. But only once your puppy/ dog has been consistently rewarded for going outside, and there have been no accidents inside for a while. They will need to be taught how to use the dog door.

Accidents are not a sign of a 'bad dog'

Remember it's not their fault if they have accidents, they just haven't learnt what's expected of them yet, or they're being expected to 'hold on' for too long. With the right management and routines, it usually doesn't take long for puppies and dogs to be fully housetrained.