

# Housetraining

The best time to start teaching a puppy where to eliminate is between 7 and 9 weeks of age. Before that time, puppies do not seem to learn the concept or control themselves sufficiently. After 9 weeks of age, they seem to prefer using whatever surface or place they were using between 7 and 9 weeks of age. So it is very important that you make sure your pup has as few chances to go in the wrong places, and as many chances to go in the right places, as possible during this crucial time.

This is one reason that toy dogs in general, and especially those bought from pet stores, may be more difficult to housetrain. It's easy to raise toy dogs indoors, and very often such dogs have never had the experience of eliminating outside by the time you bring them home. They don't recognize grass or the great outdoors as a bathroom area, and they are slow to accept it as such.

It doesn't help that the typical dog owner pushes the puppy out the door and leaves him all alone outside, where the puppy protests, cries, and does just about everything but relieve himself. Once let back inside, though, he relaxes enough to wet all over the floor. No matter how busy you are, early house-training must be a team sport. Go outside with him! And just as you would train any other behavior, lavish him with praise and, more important, treats for eliminating in the right place. Keep a jar of treats by the door and grab a handful when you go outside with him. Wait until he's just finishing, then heap on the praise and give him a treat. Don't wait until you're back inside; that's too late.

A regular schedule is important for housetraining. You can help your puppy to have a regular bowel movement by feeding him on schedule and making sure you don't give him novel foods that may cause diarrhea. You should also take him outside when he awakens, after he eats, and before he goes to bed. You will also need to take him out in between those times. A standard rule of thumb is that a puppy can hold himself for as many hours as he is months old. He can go longer overnight, if you don't let him eat or guzzle down water before bed. That in turn means not encouraging vigorous play, which will make him thirsty, before bedtime. And of course, there are limits. Beyond the age of 8 months, the rule comes to a standstill; no dog should be asked to hold it beyond 8 hours.

Young puppies avoid eliminating in their sleeping and eating areas, so if you restrict your puppy to a small area he's less likely to eliminate there and will make an effort to hold himself until you let him out. You can use the crate as his small area, making sure it's not so large that he can simply use



## Gotta go!

Be responsive to your dog's cues and schedules.

- Immediately after a puppy awakens, he must urinate.
- Within 15 minutes after eating, he must defecate. (The act of eating puts into motion all sorts of peristaltic gut motility.)
- In the middle of playing, he must urinate—a lot.
- If he exercises a lot he'll drink a lot more water, and a while later he'll also have to urinate.
- If he starts whining for no reason, he has a reason, and it's going to smell bad unless you get him outside.
- When you see him sniffing and circling, he's going to go. Get him outside as fast as possible, even if you must carry him there.
- When in doubt, take him out!

one half of it for his bathroom. If your crate is too large, block off part of it with a box or divider.

Confine your pup when you can't supervise him, but let him out regularly. If you force him to have accidents in his crate, he'll give up trying to hold it at all.

When you let him out, take him immediately to his elimination area. Once he's relieved himself, socialize, play, snuggle, and do all the fun things that make having a puppy worth all the work.

Once he's housetrained using the crate, expand his den area by placing his bed or crate in a tiny enclosed area—an area only a couple of feet beyond the boundary of his bed. Do everything you can to prevent him from soiling this area; that is, keep him on a frequent outdoor bathroom break schedule. Gradually expand his area as he goes without soiling it, until eventually he has access to an entire room, or more.

## Housetraining Timeline

### **Birth—seven weeks**

- He needs to explore while he's still fearless. Good experiences at this age will stay with him throughout life, helping him take new situations in stride later on.
- It's a good idea for him to practice sleeping by himself for short stretches. A little crate or bed is perfect for learning to sleep alone, or with a cuddly, warm toy.

### **Eight—twelve weeks**

- After 9 weeks of age, puppies seem to cling to whatever substrate they learned to use for relieving themselves between 7 and 9 weeks of age. Make sure that during this crucial time he's using whatever you want him to use for the rest of his life.
- Expose him to being alone for short periods. If you wait until he's 12 weeks, studies have shown he will have a much more difficult time adjusting. Exposure should be for very short time periods, before he has a chance to become stressed.

### **Three—six months**

- He's only now entering his heavy chewing stage. His baby teeth were capable of decorating everything with tiny pinprick holes, but his adult teeth can do a lot more damage.
- It's not unusual for him to regress when it comes to elimination habits. A good rule of thumb is to not expect him to hold himself for more hours than he is months old. That means your 3-month-old can only hold himself for 3 hours or less, if he's been playing or drinking a lot.

### **Seven—twelve months**

- He's going to need somewhat more exercise than before. He needs to walk around the block, sniff all the neat smells, and see something new every day.

- If he regresses in his housetraining, you need to take a step back in your training. He may look like an adult, but remember: He's been on this earth less than a year.

## Dealing with Accidents

All puppies have accidents, and Yorkie puppies seem to have more than their share. If you catch him in the act, give a startling "No!" or "Aght!" and scoop him up to scuttle him outside as quickly as possible. Once outside, be sure to reward him when he goes in the right place.

Unless you catch him in the act, punishment doesn't work, and even then, overzealous punishment only teaches him to be afraid of you. Rubbing your dog's nose in a mess, no matter how recently it was deposited, doesn't do anything but convince him you're strange. Punishing him after the act is counterproductive because your dog seldom knows why you're on a rant and it causes him to distrust you. Also, your unpredictable nature makes him nervous, increasing the likelihood he will have to urinate or defecate.

It's vitally important that you clean up any accidents, not just because you want to still have company come over, but because odors play an important role in signaling puppies and dogs to urinate or defecate. If it's urine, sop up as much as you can. Then drench it in an odor neutralizer. Odor neutralizers, which are available from pet stores, attack the molecules that create the odors. They won't totally destroy them, but you can then have a hope of masking them with a strong scented freshener. The neutralizers only work as long as they are moist, so you can place plastic wrap over the area to keep it

moist a little longer. It's impossible to cover the scent with carpet fresheners; dogs have too good a sense of smell for that. Solids are usually easier to pick up, but you should still spray the area afterward. Diarrhea can be a challenge, but even though it may have you considering tile floors, you can do it.

## Indoor Plumbing

Many Yorkie owners find that it's convenient to train their dogs to use an indoor potty in addition to going outside. Ranging from simple absorbent pads to self-watering indoor lawns, indoor potties are all the rage for sophisticated Yorkies.

**Paper training.** Newspaper has been the standard indoor system for generations of puppies and even adults. But wet newspaper stinks, falls

apart, and tends to stay wet. Dogs can track urine and even newsprint on their wet feet. Other systems really are better.

**Litter boxes.** Dogs can be trained to use litter boxes, but you don't want to use cat litter in them. Cat litter is designed to make it easy and enticing for cats to dig—just what you don't want for your dog! It also has a greater tendency to stick to paws and especially to long hair. Finally, dogs are more likely to eat litter, and eating the clumping type of cat litter can be very unhealthy.

Dog litter consists of much larger pellets (about as wide as a pencil and an inch or two in length) made of a mixture of absorbent paper and wood pulp. The pellets allow liquids to drain to the bottom of the pan, and then absorb them from the bottom up, leaving the top layer dry. The litter is placed in a high-sided litter box to accommodate male leg-lifters and dogs that kick after they relieve themselves.

**Grid systems.** Grid systems consist of a grating that stands above a paper-lined tray, preventing the dog from stepping in urine or the wet papers just below. The paper is changed as needed.

**Disposable pads.** Another solution to keep your dog's feet dry is to increase absorbency and cover it with a layer of paper that stays dry. Enter the absorbent pads, based on the same concept as highly absorbent baby diapers. At one time such pads were just considered a replacement for newspaper as a housetraining aid, but as more people found they were handy for everyday use, even with adults, the pads' popularity grew. The best pads have a non-slip waterproof backing, absorbent layers, and leak-proof edges, and are scented so that dogs are attracted to them.

**Washable pads.** One problem with paper pads is that some dogs, especially puppies, like to turn them into confetti. In addition, because they're disposable, using them exclusively over a period of years can get costly and isn't exactly eco-conscious. Many people look at their expense and opt to just put down a scatter rug for the dog to use. The problem is that dogs then generalize to using all scatter rugs in the house, pretty much defeating the purpose. In addition, scatter rugs can be unwieldy to wash. Other owners just use towels, but towels aren't that absorbent and they don't prevent liquids from seeping through to the floor beneath. Besides, who wants to dry off with one after it's been used for that? More savvy owners buy plastic-lined bed pads made for incontinent people. They trap moisture and don't allow it to seep out. Now specially made absorbent bed pads are available for dogs. Many breeders of long-coated toy dogs opt to line their kennel run floors with the pads as they help prevent coat damage that otherwise occurs from urine seeping into the hair.

**Sod systems.** Sod systems use either real or artificial grass to provide your dog with a miniature indoor yard. You might think you could hammer together some boards, throw in some dirt, and plant some grass, but after a few weeks, you'd see—or at least smell—the problem with that. In order to thwart odors, you need a waterproof frame (not wood), a way to rinse or drain urine, and an easy means to replace sod periodically. These systems can be kept outside on a balcony or inside (in which case you need to

change the grass more often). Otherwise you should replace the grass every couple of months, and in between times spray it twice a week with a urine neutralizer to eliminate odors.

## Teaching Your Dog to Use an Indoor Potty

If your dog has never been trained to eliminate outside, training him to use an indoor potty is very simple. You use the same vigilance that you would if you were training him to go outside to relieve himself, except that when he appears ready to go, you hustle him to the indoor area. If the system you're using is pre-scented with odors to attract the dog, he may naturally go there. If the system isn't pre-scented, you can capture some urine from your dog and sprinkle it on the area. Dogs tend to relieve themselves where they smell they've gone before.

An indoor pen is a handy training tool. Place the pen on a tile or non-absorbent floor, or place a plastic liner, such as an old shower curtain, under it. Put the dog's bed and bowls in one corner, leave a space of a few feet, and cover most of the rest of the floor with your potty system of choice. He won't want to use his bed, so by default he will use the potty. That's why you don't want much bare floor in there, especially at first. If you're using a grid system, take the grid part off at first so he gets used to using the papers beneath. As the dog grows more proficient at hitting the target, you can either expand the pen or, if you're using pads, decrease their area, always keeping it as far away from the bed and bowls as possible. Remember to praise and even give your dog a treat for doing this special "trick."

If your dog is already trained to eliminate outside, you may have to start by bringing in actual sod from his outdoor potty area and placing it on the indoor potty. Place the sod on the indoor system, and gradually decrease the amount of area the sod covers. If you're planning to use artificial grass, and your dog is used to real grass, start with real grass and switch once he's used to going inside.

Despite their convenience, indoor potties are no substitute for taking your dog for a walk. An outdoor excursion is meant as more than an elimination break. It gives your dog exercise, social interaction, mental stimulation, and something to look forward to every day. It does the same for you. But there's no reason you can't have both!

## Setting Limits

Decide now what areas of your home will be off limits, and use barriers to keep your Yorkie out. Most people allow their Yorkies on the furniture, but if that's not in your plans don't lift him up there. In fact, it's a good idea to sit on the floor with your puppy when you can, since young puppies are apt to launch themselves from the sofa and hurt themselves upon landing. If you do want your puppy on the furniture, make sure he can get down by way of some pillows or other stairway or ramp.

If you want him off the furniture, spend time on the floor with him. Provide him with a bed that's just as soft, maybe in a place with a good view. And if he does get on the furniture, simply lift him down and say "No." Teach him to go to his bed on cue by rewarding him when he goes there on his own. As he starts to eagerly run to his bed, give him the cue "Place!" and reward him once he's there.

## **Stop the Chewing!**

Even the best-behaved puppies chew, not only when they are teething, but at least until they're a year old. When you find your puppy chewing on your belongings, take the object from him and replace it with a more acceptable object. Make sure the object you give him in exchange does not resemble anything of yours you don't want him to chew. That means no old shoes! No socks, no stuffed animals (if you have children who collect them), nothing that resembles anything he can find around the house. What your puppy learns to chew on at an early age will tend to be what he looks for to chew on for the rest of his life.

Assemble a group of dog toys and only let your puppy have a few at a time, rotating them every few days so he has the excitement of new toys. Be sure to include some interactive toys, such as those he must work at in order to extract food. You can fill these with bones, soft cheese, canned dog food, or peanut butter, and then freeze them to make them last even longer. Some toys dispense kibble a piece at a time as the toy is rolled. Some toys are meant to be soaked in water and frozen, providing your puppy a cold teething toy. With luck, your Yorkie will prefer these fancy toys to your fancy belongings.