



# HOUSEBREAKING PUPPIES

Courtesy of MercyVet.

MercyVet is a full service holistic veterinary hospital located at 2707 76th Avenue SE, Mercer Island, WA 98040. 206-232-7667

Congratulations! You have just acquired a new puppy, and in between having fun and enjoying him/her, you will have to teach your pet certain rules of behavior. Let's start with some important facts. During the third week of life, puppies start moving away from the nest to eliminate, and by 5 weeks old, they begin urinating and defecating in a regular place. From this point, up until 8 1/2 weeks old, they will start developing surface preferences for elimination. During this period, puppies develop neuromuscular control of their bladders and bowels. So, from 7 weeks on, your efforts to potty-train will be most rewarding! Here are some steps for you to follow:

## 1. TAKE THE PUPPY OUTDOORS TO ELIMINATE 6-8 TIMES A DAY.

The most important times are upon awakening, 15 minutes after meals, and after play sessions. It is best to have your puppy on a leash and take him to the same location so that he can sniff previous odors. It may take 15-20 minutes of sniffing; avoid playing so the puppy concentrates.



*Yuki takes a potty break*

## 2. CHOOSE A SIMPLE PHRASE

Use a phrase such as go potty, or potty time, and repeat it to exhaustion, before and especially during defecation/urination.

## 3. REWARD YOUR PUPPY

Immediately after getting the job done (within 15 seconds), offer praise, food treats or playtime. (This means you must be with your puppy while she eliminates, so you can praise before she engages in another activity.)

## 4. SUPERVISE YOUR PUPPY INDOORS

Watch your puppy like a hawk or use a leash or bells on the collar. Whenever you can't watch the puppy, he should be placed in a puppy-proof area, like a crate, a large box, or a small bathroom (without rugs.)

## 5. PROVIDE INDOOR ELIMINATION AREAS IF NEEDED

An 8-12 week old puppy usually can go 2-4 hours without needing to eliminate. For longer periods, use paper or housebreaking pads, place them inside a crate or a confinement area. Make sure the puppy has space for a rest/restaurant area away from the wastes. Upon getting home, immediately take the puppy outdoors. You may wish to take a sheet of soiled paper to the outdoor bathroom to reinforce the message. By 7-9 months old, usually puppies

can go 8-10 hours without soiling.

## 6. TEACH YOUR PUPPY TO SIGNAL WHEN SHE HAS TO GO.

You can hang a bell onto the doorknob and teach the puppy to nudge it, then you open the door. You can also cue the dog with a key phrase, like "need to go out?" The puppy's reaction will indicate whether he needs to eliminate. Many will learn to bark as a signal.

## 7. PROPERLY FEED AND WATER YOUR PUPPY.

A full stomach stimulates the colon to contract within 10-30 minutes—a good time to take your puppy out! But pets need access to water at all times. If you're concerned that thirst and/or urination is excessive, please bring that up with your veterinarian.

## 8. PUNISHMENT FOR MISTAKES.

Mistakes are best prevented by constant vigilance. The only time that reprimanding works is when the puppy is sniffing and assuming position; try stomping your feet or saying NO out loud, grab the puppy and run outside! If you find a puddle or a pile in the house, clean it up really well with a product specific for that use, which will degrade the odor (don't use bleach.) Scolding your puppy after the fact will only confuse and intimidate her.

## 9. DEVELOP VERSATILITY.

Once the puppy reaches 4-6 months of age (most are housebroken by this age), you can introduce him to different surfaces and locations. For example, dogs who usually eliminate in the yard should now learn to do it during a walk; or off leash; or on soil rather than grass. Use your key phrase and then praise to tell the puppy it's okay.

## 10. DISCUSS PROBLEMS WITH YOUR VETERINARIAN.

If you're having problems that are not responding to these techniques, there may be physical or emotional causes that together you can identify. We are here to help you!