

HOUSEBREAKING BY THE CRATE METHOD

By instinct, a dog will not eliminate in his living space. Therefore, a crate used for housebreaking should fit the pet's need to stand, turn around, and lie flat. If too large, the dog may eliminate in one area and live in another. A partition or divider may be used to assure he does not have that extra space.

Pick a long weekend or a time when you can work with your dog for two or three days around the clock. Your dog should be placed in the crate around the clock and taken out periodically (a maximum of two hour intervals for puppies, longer for older dogs). When taken out, tell your dog to eliminate by using a term you are comfortable with. It is important that you always use the same term. Give your dog at least ten minutes to eliminate. If your dog eliminates, then play with him/her, praising and/or giving him a treat for appropriate behavior. If elimination does not occur, no playing, praise, or reward should be given. After the established time interval put your dog back into the crate until the next scheduled "outing". It is important to schedule feedings so that you precede an elimination interval. It is essential that no other playing or attention be given, except during the elimination periods, for the 2-3 day housebreaking period, as other playful or reward periods will breakdown the association of good times with outside elimination.

After the initial training period, you will begin the reinforcement period, which lasts about two weeks.

REINFORCEMENT PERIOD

At bedtime, take your dog outside and give him/her a chance to exercise. Take him/her to an area where he/she has already eliminated if possible, and praise him strongly if he eliminates.

First thing in the morning, let your dog outside (if he is small enough, carry him/her). If you hurry, he will be more apt to do his job in a "rush". Bring him into the house and allow him to run in a small area of the house where you will be.

Around noon, let him out to exercise. After you have seen him eliminate, bring him back into the house for an hour or two of "confined freedom" with you. Take him outside again for a "quickie" elimination before putting him back in his crate.

Just before dinner, take your dog outside to exercise and bring him back inside for more "confined freedom". Feed him dinner and take him outside again to exercise.

After dinner, allow him "controlled freedom" with you, taking him outside again about two hours after his dinner outing. When you are ready to retire, use the bedtime routine.

After about two weeks of this routine, the pattern should be set and you should be able to allow your pet more freedom!

