

RSPCA SA Dog Training Puppy Partnership Program Useful Handouts

Toilet Training

Toilet training your puppy is a marathon, not a sprint. There will be accidents, even when you think you've cracked it. The best thing to remember on your toilet training journey is that it is all about consistency.

What will you need?

- 🐾 A play pen or baby gates to separate a small area
- 🐾 Soft, washable bedding
- 🐾 A safe space for your puppy – ideally a crate
- 🐾 Long lasting treats and food dispensing toys
- 🐾 Puppy pads
- 🐾 A 1.8 – 2m lead
- 🐾 Enzymatic cleaner (for accidents)

Set up your home for success

- 🐾 Decide where you want your play pen. It should be in an area that is part of your daily routine at home. If you are in the lounge room a lot, then set it up in the lounge room.
- 🐾 Arrange the play pen so that it is comfortable.
- 🐾 The puppy's safe space should be filled with clean and comfortable bedding and covered. You can use a size appropriate crate for this. A crate is where your puppy can go and all the good stuff happens. It's where he/she gets their food and toys and reinforcement for being quiet and calm. It is also where puppy goes when you have visitors that might excite or overwhelm the puppy.

When to get your puppy out

- 🐾 First thing in the morning and just before bed
- 🐾 After play
- 🐾 After drinking
- 🐾 After eating
- 🐾 Some puppies may need to go out during the night
- 🐾 Take puppy outside on leash
- 🐾 When puppy toilets, make a happy fuss, give a treat and if possible let off the leash for some play or sniffing time.
- 🐾 When take puppy back inside, place in safe place with a chew or meal.
- 🐾 Whenever puppy is out of the play pen or crate, then you must be actively supervising.

What to watch for

- 🐾 Sniffing the ground
- 🐾 Circling
- 🐾 Squatting
- 🐾 Removing themselves from play to look for a quiet place

When this is happening, distract your puppy by calling his/her name in your happy voice and help them go outside. Wait for toileting then reinforce with praise and treats.

What if puppy has an accident

- 🐾 This is why you are controlling the space your puppy can access
- 🐾 You will have accidents
- 🐾 Do not punish, reprimand or make a big deal of it – just ignore the accident
- 🐾 Clean it up thoroughly with your enzymatic cleaner
- 🐾 Pay attention and get your puppy out more

Why don't you tell your puppy off when he does the "wrong" thing?

- 🐾 Dogs don't speak English
- 🐾 Dogs don't understand right or wrong, just what works. Make toileting outside fun and they will keep doing it
- 🐾 Increasing stress and pressure will increase the need to urinate, it's a vicious cycle
- 🐾 You aren't helping your puppy learn what it is supposed to do
- 🐾 They will learn that toileting is unsafe in your presence and to toilet away from you. How can you reinforce a puppy for doing the right thing if he/she hides to toilet?
- 🐾 It will impact your bond

Remember that each puppy will learn differently. If you have any questions or concerns with how your puppy is developing in his toilet training, please talk to us about it. We are here to help.

Crate Training

Crates can be an amazing tool for many things. It can decrease stress and anxiety in our puppies and also helps with manners and toilet training.

What to remember

- 🐾 The crate needs to be an appropriate size for your dog. The dog needs to be able to stand up, turn around and lay down comfortably. There also needs to be plenty of room for water and food.
- 🐾 The crate is not a way of punishing the dog. CRATE = HAPPY PLACE.
- 🐾 The crate needs to be comfortable and inviting. Bedding should be soft and inviting.
- 🐾 Put her/his favourite toys in the crate and feed her/him long lasting treats and use food dispensing toys in the crate.
- 🐾 The crate should be where all the best things happen.



Steps

- 🐾 Start by setting the crate up in a place the dog enjoys. If the dog likes to spend time in the lounge room with the family then this is a good place to start. Dogs are social and enjoy being a part of the family. Make sure it is nice and comfortable.
- 🐾 Ensure the door is secured in an open position or taken off. It should not be able to accidentally close on the dog.
- 🐾 At this point the dog should not be forced to stay in the crate. It needs to be encouraged with positivity and reinforcement.
- 🐾 Introduce the dog to the crate slowly. It's a good idea to start by getting them used to going in and out of the crate by throwing some treats in. Feeding in the crate will also help encourage a positive association with the crate.
- 🐾 When the dog is comfortably spending longer periods of time in the open crate we can work on closing the door.
- 🐾 Place a long lasting treat or filled Kong in the crate and as they settle with it, close the door. Hold the door shut, do not latch.
- 🐾 If the dog moves towards the door, then open it straightaway. They should feel as though they have control of the door opening. This will decrease anxiety and help build confidence in their safe space.

Keep these sessions short and work at your dog's pace – if you repeat daily you will find overtime they will choose to stay in for longer.

Mouthing

Think of your puppy's mouth as a toddler's fingers. It's how they learn, they touch and grab and use pressure to explore new things.

The added bonus is that puppies will go through a teething stage. So mouthing feels good. It also is lots of fun when incorporated into a game.

Mouthing is normal! So to mould it into a more appropriate outlet, we need to teach our puppy some ground rules.

- 🐾 Manage your puppy's environment so that you can easily remove yourself if puppy becomes over aroused. Play pens are great for this, just step over when it's too hard for puppy to stop.
- 🐾 Reinforce all calm behaviour. Food is a great way to reinforce your puppy for quietly sitting or settling and it helps your puppy's brain start to think again.
- 🐾 If teeth touch your skin, stop play. Take yourself away, stand up and give the puppy 3 seconds of calm, then introduce a toy that the puppy is allowed to chew on.
- 🐾 Provide lots of toys. These need to be all different textures and types and they need to be rotated. The same toys get boring.
- 🐾 Do not punish or reprimand your puppy. This only produces stress and what relieves stress? Well mouthing, of course.
- 🐾 Never, ever use your hands as toys! And in particular DO NOT play rough housing! This is not clear and causes confusion
- 🐾 Puppies will often also mouth when being handled. This could be being petted; groomed; having a collar / harness or other equipment put on. This can mean that they are uncomfortable with what is happening right now. If we do not stop what we are doing as soon as they start mouthing, they may feel they need to resort to harder pressure.

Remember, this is not just a puppy faze. Adolescent dogs with mouthing and self-control issues are often released to shelters and rescues. What puppy practices now is what he/she will be very good at as an adult.

Puppy Play

Puppies have a critical development period. This means that everything they experience now will contribute to the adult dog they become.

Playtime is so much fun, but it's important that play is regulated so that we help our puppies learn appropriate, playtime manners.

When engaging in playtime you need to teach a solid recall. This will ensure that you can mould your puppy's play in a way that ensures it is fun for everyone.

Why teach appropriate play?

- 🐾 Puppy will learn to regulate his/her mouth
- 🐾 Provides appropriate outlets for mouthing
- 🐾 Mentally tiring as well as physical
- 🐾 Opportunity to practise self-control and recalls
- 🐾 Helps puppy practise appropriate social skills so that more dogs will want to engage with her/him.
- 🐾 Means that puppy will be able to come along on more outdoor activities.

Remember:

- 🐾 Watch your puppy closely at all times - all play must be supervised. If puppy is being bullied or is being a bully, then we need to intervene. Remember that all dogs have different play styles. Some might not suit your puppy, and that is fine. We don't like everyone we meet. Neither will your puppy.
- 🐾 Let's take the "dominance" out of it. Play has nothing to do with dominance. Humping, biting, growling and even snapping are all forms of communication. Let's work through interpreting what our dogs are saying without the labels.
- 🐾 Your reinforcement needs to be better than play. When puppy starts to come to you or when you call him/her over, reinforce it every time. Give your puppy a finish cue and let him/her continue play.

Alone Time

Put yourself in your puppy's paws...

Imagine living with your mother and your brothers and sisters for the first 8 – 10 weeks of your life and then all of a sudden you are suddenly whisked away to a new, strange environment. Not only that it's an alien environment with nobody acting like your species any more.

Being alone is something that puppies (and often some adult dogs) need to learn. Generally, we all have to leave our dogs alone and it is important that the dogs are happy while we are away.

Set up a safe secure space where you puppy will stay when you are away from home. Many people use a laundry or bathroom as it is usually tiled and easy to clean up. A baby gate can be used to contain the puppy in the room.

This safe area should include; a water bowl, a snuggly bed, some toys to play with and a toilet area.

Teach your puppy to use food dispensing toys. Your Instructor and assistant will show you some examples in class. The most common one is a KONG. However, even something as simple as cardboard boxes can be used too! When using these enrichment items you will initially need to supervise your puppy to ensure they do not choke or otherwise injure themselves, or ingest any parts of the toy.



Begin feeding your puppy all of their meals in the safe space whether you are home or not. Leave the gate or door open when you are home so the puppy can come and go as they please. When they choose to go into that space reinforce heavily with lots of tasty rewards. Then your puppy will be more likely to go there in the future.

Put your puppy in the safe space for short periods of time and close the gate or door. Before you put them in play with them, take them for a toilet break and then give them a KONG or hard chew to enjoy while they are confined.

You can also play soft classical music or a calmly read audiobook for brief periods, as this can help puppies to relax.



ADAPTIL spray or collars have been scientifically proven to help puppies or dogs experiencing stress. ADAPTIL is a synthetic pheromone that mimics the pheromone that a mother dog would secrete to calm her pups.

If you find your dog is still having trouble settling in their safe space please speak to your Instructor