

Starting Your Puppy Out on the Right Paw

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What are the pros and cons of raising a pup in the house vs. raising one in a kennel? There was a time when authorities on training hunting dogs felt a dog's ability to be a good hunter would be ruined if it was raised in the house. Boy, we have come a long way from those days. I know many a hunting dog that would bark in agreement with the change.

As a dog trainer, I see many young dogs. Most are brought in for retriever training when they are seven to twelve months old. You can tell the difference between a kennel-raised pup and pups raised in the house. Pups taken home from the breeder and raised in a kennel, void of human companionship, lack the necessary one-on-one with family members and have not bonded with people. These pups often are hyperactive, will be more difficult to train, and exhibit signs of shyness when introduced to new situations. Sad to say, but more often than not, a kennel pup is out of sight and out of mind except at feeding time. A pup raised in a kennel that receives lots of time and daily attention from family members, is taken on walks, played with, and given lots of TLC, and should grow up and be a well-adjusted dog with no problems

Housebreaking

If your pup is to be a housedog, be sure you have a good enzyme rug shampoo made especially for pets. It will remove the urine and feces odor so that the pup does not go back to the same spot because of any remaining odor left in the carpet from the pup's accident. Hard to believe, but each and every time a puppy wakes up, it has to be taken outside, even if it was just out fifteen minutes ago. Puppies must also be taken out each time they are fed and watered. The easiest way to stop a pup from going in the house is not to let him get started.

I have found a painless way to housebreak a pup (well, almost painless). Go to a craft store and buy two packages of bells (jingle bell type). Yes, I did say bells. Find an old hole-free sock, remove the bells from the package and place them in the sock. Tie a knot in the sock, being sure to leave enough room so the bells can move around and jingle. The length of the string should be twenty-seven inches. Attach the string with the sock to the knob of the door you will use to take the pup outside. You will want the sock about three inches off the floor. Each time you take the pup outside, be sure to swing the sock so the bells ring. Within a week or less, the pup will be going to the door and moving the sock. It may sound crazy, but it does work. Often a pup will go to the door but no one knows he is waiting there and wants to go out, so he wets in front of the door. You can't blame the pup for the accident. After all, he went to the door. You just didn't know he was there. Now you will be able to hear the bells jingle as he moves the sock, alerting you to his needs.

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It is very important to pick an area that you want your pup to use when you take him outside. The key words here are you pick the area, not the pup. The first time you take the pup out, pick him up and carry him to the area you want him to use. Pups are creatures of habit and will go in the area they have first used. If you take the pup out and he goes to the shrubs, be prepared for him to use the same spot when he is old enough to hike his leg and hit the shrubs, which will turn yellow and die from the acid in the deposits left on them.

Crate Breaking

You will need a small airline kennel. It can be bought at discount stores or pet supply stores. Purchase a crate only big enough to comfortably house the pup. Most pups will keep the area they sleep in clean. That is the reason you use a smaller crate. After the pup is crate-broken, he can be moved into a larger crate. Using a kennel crate is the easiest way to teach a pup to stay clean all night. Start out by letting the pup spend some time in it during the day. To pacify him, give the pup a rawhide when you put him in the crate for the first time. Be sure the crate is where the pup can see you. If the pup starts to bark because of his lost freedom, tell him, "No." If he persists in barking, open the crate and place your hand around the pup's muzzle, covering the pup's eyes. Slap the *hand* you have around the pup's mouth saying in a firm voice, "No. *Quiet.*" The pup has to learn the first time out that *you* are in charge, not the puppy. Don't worry, the slapping of your hand will not hurt the pup in the least, but be sure you cover the pup's eyes so he does not become hand-shy. You don't want the pup to be afraid of you but to respect your verbal command.

When the pup is able to stay in the crate without barking, it's time to put him in it all night. It is very important not to feed and water your pup past early evening. If he is allowed to continue to eat and drink, it will make the task of his sleeping all night very difficult. The pup should be put in the crate without newspaper, blankets, etc. Place the crate elevated on a chair at the level of your bed. You want the pup to be secure and being able to see you will help him. Pups like to sleep in a clean area and will get restless when they have to go out. If the pup starts moving around, take him outside. If you are consistent in taking the pup out each time he seems restless, you will have him sleeping through the night error-free within a week or so. When the pup is crate-broken, he can be moved into a larger kennel.

Chewing

This is one thing all pups like to do. Have plenty of chew-type toys; rawhides, chew bones, things the pup can chew on. If the pup starts to chew on anything he shouldn't be chewing on, tell the pup in a firm tone, "No." If the pup persists in chewing, wrap your hand around the pup's mouth and gently squeeze his muzzle into his gums, saying, "No." This is the correction to be used each time the pup chews anything but his own toys. It won't be long before just a firm "No" will stop this undesirable behavior. The word "no" is one of the most important commands for the pup to learn and will be used a lot during his lifetime.

By the age of only seven weeks, a pup's brain is adult size. At sixteen weeks, his character is fixed. At this time, he should be with people who care about him. They need to instruct him and begin his learning process. The pup needs to know what is expected of him. What makes this

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difficult is there are lots of people in the house all telling the puppy to do things, each in a different way. All pups need consistency in what is expected of them. Not only does the pup need to be trained, but also so does the whole family. They need to know what they can and cannot do with the pup. Raising a pup is like raising kids. My daughter will tell my grandkids, "*Don't do that. I said don't do that.*" The third time she hollers, "*Don't do that!*" and stands up to take action. At this point, the children stop the undesirable behavior. The kids have learned that they really don't have to obey the command until she says it three times and stands up. When training a pup, everyone in the family must be consistent. It will make the pup's life a whole lot easier to know what is expected of him by one and all.

Retrieving

A good place to start a young pup retrieving in the house is to use a long hallway. Close all the doors off of the hallway. Kneel down in the front of the hallway holding the pup in front of you and using the command, "*Watch.*" Throw an old sock tied in a knot or the pup's favorite ball down the hallway. As the pup comes back with the a ball or sock, reach out and get him. Be sure to praise him for his retrieve. When you have the pup delivering to hand each time, you can start him retrieving in open areas of the house. I like to always use the command "*Watch*" prior to throwing anything for the pup to retrieve. This word will be incorporated into the pup's early pre-force-fetching training, which I start when the pup is four months old. This will all be covered in the next article.