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## Help! How Do I Housetrain My Puppy?

*The principles outlined in this handout are intended as a general guide only and should be applied under the supervision of an Accredited CGC™ Instructor.*

**If your pup has any physical problems such as straining, diarrhoea or discoloured urine please seek veterinary advice prior to implementing the principles outlined in this handout.**

So you have a new puppy? That's wonderful! The next few months will be full of fun as you get to know each other and your new addition becomes part of the family. To help your puppy (lets' call him Deefer) fit in with your family, you need to teach him some simple rules about housetraining.

### Why should you housetrain Deefer?



Deefer is a social animal and enjoys being part of your family. The more time you spend together, the more you will grow to understand each other and the greater the chance of a fulfilling relationship.

You will also find that the more you are together, the easier it will be for you to teach Deefer good manners. So it is best if he spends some of his time with you indoors as well as out. For Deefer to be accepted indoors, he needs to learn not to toilet inside.

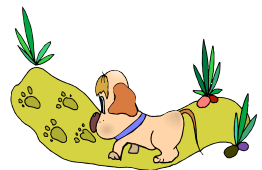
### But isn't housetraining difficult?

We don't find that housetraining is difficult, however it is time-consuming and to gain the best results you will need to be patient and consistent. If you can do this you will eventually be rewarded with a dog who can wait to toilet in an appropriate area.

There are a multitude of theories and methods used to housetrain puppies. Successful housetraining makes use of Deefer's natural tendencies and preferences, so we have based the principles outlined in this handout on these natural instincts.

### What are Deefer's natural preferences for toileting?

For the first weeks of Deefer's life his mother cleans up any mess that he and his litter mates make. As Deefer grows older his mother reduces her cleaning and Deefer begins to follow her out to where she usually toilets. In this way Deefer develops a natural tendency to toilet away from his eating and sleeping areas.



By the time he is eight weeks old he will also have developed a preference for particular surfaces to toilet on, depending on what has been available for him to use.

So if Deefer has had access to dirt and grass, he will tend to want to use these surfaces. However, if Deefer has made use of carpet or lino because he has not had easy access outside, then he will be quite happy to use these surfaces.

### Choose a specific area for Deefer to use:

Where you want Deefer to toilet is up to you. A wide variation is possible, from large or small areas outside the house to a layer of newspaper inside or an indoor animal toilet of some type. It can be a good idea to start with a fairly large area and gradually reduce the size as Deefer becomes aware of what you want.

Establish an area that suits you and be consistent so that Deefer does not become confused. As discussed earlier, Deefer learns to toilet on particular surfaces as well as in particular locations, so it is important to be consistent in the area offered.

Deefer will also be attracted back to areas he has used previously, so you can use this to your advantage by leaving a small amount of Deefer's waste in the area you wish him to use. It sometimes also helps if you leave the grass a little longer in this section of your yard.

### What should I do when I take Deefer out to toilet?

Try not to carry Deefer outside - he needs to learn that getting out under his own steam is part of the bargain. It is preferable to take him out on lead so that he cannot leave the area you expect him to toilet in.



The lead is used only to prevent Deefer from leaving the designated area so that he toilets in the correct area, thus developing the desired habit. **Never** use the lead to reprimand him.

When you take Deefer out to the toilet do not make the mistake of allowing Deefer or yourself to be sidetracked by play! Stand still and wait for him to go. You need to make yourself totally boring so pretend you are a tree. Fold your arms and don't look directly at Deefer. This may require a lot of patience on your behalf but don't give in!

Sometimes Deefer may need a little encouragement. If this is the case encourage him to move in small circles, as this tends to be part of the toileting ritual and may help him to focus on the job at hand.

As soon as Deefer begins to toilet, praise him enthusiastically. Offer him a couple of highly favoured treats as soon as he has finished. It is essential to do this *immediately* if Deefer is to identify what is being rewarded.

You must convince Deefer that he is the best pup in the world for going to the toilet in the correct area. Make it obvious to Deefer that you are very happy with him. The best way to achieve success is to reward and praise Deefer every time he goes in the right place. The more often you reward him, the sooner he will understand what you want.

Do not always finish Deeper's outings the moment he toilets or he may learn to hold on for a long time in an effort to continue his adventure outside with you. Ignore him until he toilets - then praise, reward and have a play session before going inside.

Make sure you stay with Deeper while he toilets - this way you'll know for sure that he has gone. On a cold winter night it is tempting to just open the door and let him out, but you won't know for sure whether he has toileted, so you must go with him.

Always allow Deeper enough time to "empty" completely, or he may feel the need to go again sooner than expected.



### How often does Deeper need to toilet?

How often Deeper needs to go depends on many factors including his age, gender, state of health and when he had his last meal or drink.

As a young puppy Deeper's waste system is still fairly immature. He has a high metabolism but a small bladder and he will need to go far more often than a mature dog. So in the early stages Deeper won't always make it to the chosen toileting area - understand that this is part of having a new puppy - and keep a cloth handy for cleanups!

Once over the age of about 6 months Deeper should be capable of withholding for much longer periods of time and can usually last through a night without the need to go.

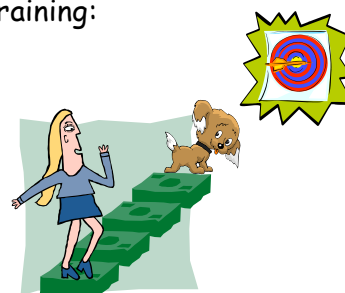
As Deeper ages, or if he falls into ill health, he may need to toilet more often due to weaknesses in his system. You need to be understanding of this and prepared to compromise.

**Remember we said earlier that housetraining shouldn't be difficult? If you follow the basic guidelines you will find it much easier to succeed.**

### Basic Guidelines:

Each of the following is important in achieving successful housetraining:

- 🐾 Observation and timing
- 🐾 Regular breaks
- 🐾 Outside after meals
- 🐾 Outside after naps and play sessions
- 🐾 Cleaning soiled areas



Let's have a look at these principles in more detail.

### 🐾 Observation and timing:

The keys to successful housetraining are observation and timing.

If you watch Deeper closely you will find that he will usually give some indication that he wants to toilet by displaying certain behaviours. These behaviours will be different for each dog. Deeper may start sniffing the ground and circling. He may hunch his back and walk a

little splay-legged. He may ignore you when you talk to him and walk around whining a little. This is the time to take him to your chosen area.

Become very familiar with these signs as knowing what Deeper does before he toilets will increase your success rate with housetraining.

With regard to timing you must remember that Deeper will need to relieve himself after he eats or drinks, after a period of play and after he wakes up. Deeper cannot tell the time, is easily distracted and becomes totally involved in whatever activity he is involved in. So it is your responsibility to ensure that he is taken to the appropriate area *before* he begins to toilet.

If Deeper goes to the toilet in the wrong place it means you have not been observant enough. Don't stress about this - aim instead to be more observant next time. Your timing will improve with practice and you will soon find your success rate improves.

#### Give regular breaks:

Remember, Deeper has a high metabolism but a small bladder. So at 8 weeks of age take him out to the designated area in the yard every 1-2 hours to ensure he is given plenty of chances to succeed. As he gets older you should increase the time between breaks so that by about 6 - 8 months he should be capable of restraining himself for quite a few hours.

#### Outside after meals:

Regardless of how often you regularly take him out, Deeper will also need to go out anywhere from 5 minutes to an hour after eating. Watch him carefully and be ready to head out at the first indication of wanting to go. It helps to schedule a regular short walk outside after feed time so this becomes a habit for you and him.

#### Outside after naps and play sessions:

Inactivity slows the production of waste products and this generally allows Deeper to sleep without soiling or wetting his bed, but he will have an urgent need as soon as he wakes up and moves around. So every time he wakes fully from a nap, take him outside.



This means that if Deeper wakes in the middle of the night he will probably need to toilet - and you will have to take him to your chosen area or suffer the consequences! If you leave him and he soils his sleeping area he will be stressed, you will be stressed and your relationship will falter.

Similarly, if Deeper has had a play session you should offer a toilet break before settling him down for a nap. He is likely to have been so busy playing that he has forgotten he may need to toilet, and if he goes to sleep on a full bladder he won't sleep for long before he is woken by the need to go.

#### Clean soiled areas:

Remember how we said Deeper will be attracted back to toilet in any area he has used previously? This means you need to thoroughly clean any areas that have been soiled

inappropriately with an enzymatic cleaner such as Bac to Nature, or a good soap based cleaner and then rinse with white vinegar or a commercial pet odour neutralizer to remove evidence of previous use. Do NOT use bleach or ammonia based disinfectants as these may serve to attract Deefer back to that area.

### What if I'm away?

It will be easiest if you can train Deefer to toilet where you want him to from the beginning, however this may not always be possible, *eg* if you are away at work and cannot leave him with access outdoors in your absence. In this case it would be advisable to provide an alternative surface and specific area for Deefer to use indoors.

Choose an area that is easily washable and away from Deefer's sleeping and eating area - near an external door if possible. You will need to place a large piece of textured surface in this area. Some possible suggestions to use as a surface are newspaper, imitation grass, a square of fresh turf or even a box of sand.



Whatever you use ensure it is quite different in texture to the balance of your floor coverings, or Deefer will be confused.

Leaving a tiny amount of urine and/or faeces in the desired spot can help attract Deefer to the area. Take him to the area frequently when you are home and praise for toileting in the appropriate spot the same as you would for training outside. It is still important to take Deefer outdoors as often as possible and praise for toileting there also.

When you are ready to wean Deefer from toileting inside, gradually move the alternative surface closer to being outside (you may need to consider installing a doggy door). Keep an eye on Deefer when you are home, say at weekends, and encourage him to go outside as recommended above.

### Confining Deefer:

There are many different ideas when it comes to confining Deefer. The main idea is to confine him to an area where he will be disinclined to toilet. This area can be anything from a crate, a fenced off outside area (with shelter), a room in the house, *etc*, or a combination of a few areas like a crate in a laundry.

We have found that a crate is the easiest and most convenient way to confine Deefer, especially inside. Crates are available from most good pet outlets. Shop around to find one which will be large enough for Deefer to stand up and turn around in when he is fully grown. If you make the crate a good place for Deefer to be, he will come to view it as his own personal space and will be happy to spend time there.

As we said earlier, Deefer will probably be reluctant to soil his own feeding and sleeping area. So confining Deefer to a small area such as a crate with a food bowl, sleeping basket and toys will encourage him to hold on until his next outing, provided you do not leave him for longer than he is physically capable of withholding.

Attaching a couple of bells to the crate (where Deefer cannot swallow them) will also alert you to the fact that he is becoming restless and that it is time to make another trip outdoors.

### Why shouldn't I punish Deefer?

Some people may tell you to hit Deefer with a newspaper or "rub his nose in it" if he toilets in an inappropriate spot. Punishing Deefer will probably only make him less likely to toilet in front of you. This is the last thing you need because you then won't be able to encourage the behaviour you want. You may also find that Deefer begins to toilet behind the couch or somewhere similar in an effort to avoid being punished.

There is no point in punishing Deefer for toileting in an inappropriate place. Even if you do catch him toileting somewhere inappropriate, if you punish him at this time he will believe he is being punished for *toileting* - he will have no idea that it is *where* he is toileting that is the problem!



Because we cannot speak canine language, we can't tell Deefer why he is in trouble. Hitting him or rubbing his nose in his waste is cruelty. You will only confuse him, make him distrusting and delay the training process. If *he* makes a mistake, *you* have not kept up your end of the bargain - you have not kept a close enough eye on him!

The key to successful training is prevention rather than punishment. Rewarding the behaviour you want Deefer to repeat brings much quicker and better results. So set Deefer up for success by rewarding him for toileting in the correct area and you will be encouraging him to repeat this behaviour.

### Ignore Deefer's mistakes:

If a mistake is made it is best to remove Deefer from the room while it is cleaned up so that no attention, either positive or negative, is gained for toileting in the wrong spot. Sometimes Deefer craves any attention, even if it is being yelled at or getting in the way as you scrub an offending patch off the carpet.

Once you have cleaned the area carry on as usual but ensure you keep a closer eye on Deefer this time, as it is up to you to ensure he succeeds by getting him to the appropriate area before he toilets next time.

### Put toileting on request:

Yes! You can teach Deefer to go to the toilet on request!

The ability to have him toilet on request has many obvious advantages such as before he goes for a walk with you, when he is going for a long car ride, visiting other people's houses, *etc.* If he toilets before going somewhere, then the chances of him needing to go while he's away from home will be reduced. It is also very handy for last thing at night before bedtime.

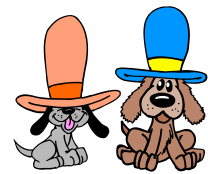
If you would like Deefer to learn to toilet on request you need to teach him to associate the request with toileting. Any request will do, some examples of words you can use are "Hurry up", "Quickly", "Wee Wee", "Empty".

To teach the association, you should say your chosen word just as Deefer begins to toilet. If he hears the word every time he performs the action he will begin to associate the word with that action. As usual, reward Deefer with praise and give him a treat as he finishes.

After a few repetitions, you should begin to say the word just a fraction earlier, until you are saying the word before he toilets and getting a good response. You will eventually get to the stage where you can send Deefer outside to his area and he performs on cue - great for winter nights!

### Modelling:

If you have an older dog who already toilets appropriately, it can help train Deefer.



As we said earlier, Deefer begins to follow his mother outside to the toilet when he is still with her and in this way learns to avoid soiling his living quarters. This process is interrupted when Deefer comes to live with you however Deefer may willingly follow the older dog's lead instead. So allow Deefer to head outside with the older dog. The smell of another dog's urine can also prompt Deefer to toilet, so this may help.

### Why does Deefer wee when we have visitors?

Deefer gets very excited when visitors arrive, or even when you arrive back after an absence. In his excitement Deefer sometimes loses control of his bladder and leaks urine, or may even urinate as part of his natural instincts to show he is no threat to you, or is anxious about you. Deefer will normally learn to control this as he grows older and becomes more confident.

To manage this we suggest that all greetings be calm - avoid too much excitement and try to ignore Deefer until he has settled a little. Try not to stand over him too much - kneeling down to his level helps with this. You could also ensure that visitors greet Deefer outside (where it doesn't matter if he urinates a little) with everyone moving indoors once he has recovered his composure. Be patient - this phase will pass!

### Benefits for both:

Good housetraining is beneficial for both you and Deefer. He gains by becoming a valued family member and satisfying his need to be part of a social group. You benefit from the companionship of a well behaved canine citizen. As an added benefit you will also probably avoid being burgled as thieves tend to avoid houses with dogs inside!

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*If you think you need more help, or would like more information on Canine Good Citizen™ training for your pet, contact the Instructor listed on the front page of this handout.*



*For more information on the Delta Society go to [www.deltasocietyaustralia.com.au](http://www.deltasocietyaustralia.com.au)*

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Look for the other Handouts in the Delta "Help!" series:

-  Help! My Dog Jumps on Me!
-  Help! My Dog Needs Better Manners!
-  Help! My Puppy Bites!
-  Help! My Dog Digs!
-  Help! My Dog Barks!

