

Housetraining Your Miniature Schnauzer

Here are some tips to help your puppy to become a proud and well educated member of your family.

Establish a Routine

Housetraining a puppy requires time and commitment from you. The more consistent you are, the quicker your puppy will learn acceptable behavior. Like babies, puppies do best on a regular schedule. If possible, put your puppy on a regular feeding schedule. Check with your veterinarian, but depending on its age, puppies usually need to be fed 3 or 4 times a day. Feeding your puppy at consistent times each day will make it more likely that s/he will need to go to the bathroom at consistent time periods as well. This will make housetraining much easier.

Reward Good Behavior

Take your puppy outside frequently, at least every 2 hours. Your puppy should also be taken outside when it wakes up from a nap, after playing, and after eating. Establish two command phrases - one which asks "Do you need to go outside?" and another which says "Go do your hurry up!" once outside. Use whatever words you choose, but be consistent - always use the exact same phrases. Go outside with your puppy. Repeat your command phrase, and when he/she urinates or defecates, praise your puppy quietly but enthusiastically. You can also give your puppy a tidbit as a reward for eliminating outside. Most pet owners forget to reward puppies for doing the right thing. The importance of rewarding good behavior (rather than punishing unacceptable behavior) cannot be over-emphasized.

Supervise Your Puppy

A new puppy must be supervised constantly. Puppies who are allowed to wander off into rooms by themselves or who are left alone, free in the house, will most likely get into trouble. Always be sure you know where your puppy is. Encourage her to stay in the same room with you or another family member. You can "tether" him to you on a 6 foot leash or use baby gates to keep her in the room where you are. Closing doors to unoccupied rooms is also a good idea. When a puppy must be left alone for relatively long time periods, it should be confined in a small area, or crate. This area, or crate, must be large enough to provide a sleeping and playing area, as well as an area where the puppy can eliminate. Papers can be placed in part of the confinement area designated as okay for the puppy to eliminate in. Because young puppies cannot always control their bladder and bowels for long time periods, it is not fair to confine a puppy for an entire work day with no place to relieve itself. A puppy can be crated at night (preferably in the same room with a family member) if you are willing to get up and go outside with her when necessary.

Never Punish After the Fact

Virtually every puppy will have an accident in the house. Expect this - it is part of owning a puppy. If - AND ONLY IF - you catch your puppy in the act of soiling, do something that startles him, that he perceives as coming from the environment, not

from you. Make a loud noise (a whistle, slap your palm against the wall, drop something), or toss a pillow toward you puppy. DO NOT RUB YOUR PUPPY'S NOSE IN THE MESS OR HIT HIM. This will teach your puppy to be afraid of you and afraid to eliminate in your presence - and you do want her to go the bathroom in the yard when you are there. If you find a soiled area, but do not catch your puppy soiling, do nothing but clean it up. Animals do not understand punishment after the fact - even if it is only seconds. Punishment after the fact without a doubt will do more harm than good. Punishment should punish the behavior, not the animal.

Provide More Freedom Gradually

As your puppy matures and begins to show you that it understands going outside to eliminate is what you expect, you can gradually increase her freedom. If you wish, you can leave her free in the house for short time periods - while you run to the store. Don't expect her to make the transition from being confined to being left completely free in a single step.

Crate Training

Many people prefer to housebreak their dogs using a method called 'crate training'. They put their dog in a special dog crate during the night. Dogs will usually not mess in their crate as it is like their home. When you wake up, first they let their dog out into the yard. Crate training is a good way to help your dog become housebroken. Dogs like crates because it gives them a chance to be alone for a little while. Even dogs like privacy! Most new pet owners misunderstand the purpose of a dog crate. It is not a "cage" used for punishment of the poor puppy. A crate is a wonderful tool if used correctly. It is, in fact, the fastest and easiest way to potty train a puppy. The puppy should consider the crate his safe "den". Once you understand this fact, you will be able to use the puppy's den to your advantage and develop an appropriate potty training strategy.

You need to think like a dog for this to work. A dog never selects a busy area for his "den". He usually selects a dark corner off by himself where he feels secure, safe and protected. He will select a spot under a table, between furniture, or under a chair where he is able to see approaching people or other animals. The dog reverts back to his natural instinct of being a wolf no matter how domesticated we think he is. Therefore, use this concept to your advantage.

The dog will not make his den dirty. If a dog is properly trained to love his den, he will have the instinct to keep it clean. This is the main reason why a crate works in potty training your dog. A dog feels comfortable and safe in his crate and above all he wishes to have a clean environment.

A puppy follows a set pattern as the time to go potty. When he wakes up from a nap, after he eats, after he plays hard, or after it has been a while since he last went potty -- take the puppy outside to take care of his business. A puppy can not hold it a long time so you need to be trained to anticipate when he has to go potty. The better trainer you become, the better trained your puppy will be.

The following schedule should help to train the puppy's owner along with the puppy:

Morning: Puppy wakes up in his crate, you wake right up. Both you and the puppy go immediately outside. The puppy goes potty, you praise the puppy. Puppy comes back into the house for breakfast. After breakfast you both go back outside for the puppy to go potty. Puppy goes and you praise the puppy. The puppy now can play for a while safely in the house, then back outside, potty, praise, return into the house.

Afternoon: Puppy wakes up from his nap, time to go outside. Puppy goes, you praise, back into the house for lunch. Puppy eats lunch, goes outside with you and goes potty, you praise, back into the house for playtime. Puppy plays hard. Time for you to take the puppy outside to go potty, puppy goes, again you praise.

Evening: Puppy wakes up from his nap, you both go outside, puppy goes, you praise, back in the house for playtime. Time to go back outside, puppy goes, you praise, back in the house. Do you follow the pattern here? Time for puppy's dinner, puppy eats, puppy goes outside with you and goes potty, again you praise. Follow the routine?

Bedtime: You both go outside, puppy goes, you praise, back into the house. Time for bed, your puppy goes into the crate. Depending on the age of the puppy, he may need to go once or twice during the night. This improves with age. Remember in the middle of the night when you have to get up from your warm bed, why you love your puppy. Please be patient. Aren't you glad that the puppy is waking you up to go potty?

If you work, don't expect the puppy to hold it for 10 to 12 hours while you are at work. Make arrangements to go home at lunch, or have a neighbor or friend come over and let the puppy out to go potty, praise and play routine is still followed.

As the puppy gets older and can hold it longer, the crate is not as necessary. Just make sure if you allow your dog freedom that he is still confined in a safe place. Watch out for electrical cords and unsafe chew items. Get on the floor and crawl around to see what is at your dog's level. Where can he get into trouble? Make it safe.

The proper crate training of your puppy shapes the puppy's behavior in a positive method using his animal instincts. This is much better than accidents on your floor. Remember above all else to be patient and consistent with your training. Love your puppy and give him lots of praise when he does it correctly.