



K-9 Stray Rescue League

2120 Metamora Road, Oxford, MI 48371

<http://www.dogsaver.org/k9srl>



K-9 Stray Rescue League would like to help you in any way we can with your new pet. To that end we've written some suggestions to help with many common behavior problems people deal with. Please know that while these suggestions may help you solve the problem, some issues may require more assistance than we can provide. In that case we recommend seeing a qualified animal behaviorist for a behavior consultation. If you need more assistance than this handout provides, please call us to review the problem and if it requires behavioral expertise we will refer you to a behaviorist in the area.

House Training

House training can be a problem with puppies and older dogs alike. Here are some ideas to make the process go as smoothly as possible with any new canine addition to your household:

- § Provide an area of confinement. Ideally this would be a crate (see out handout on crate training), but any small area where the dog will not be isolated but will be prevented from doing harm to itself or anything else will suffice (i.e. a baby gate in the doorway of a mud room or laundry room with all clothing and chemicals out of reach). Keep in mind it should be large enough for the dog to stand and turn around, but too large an area may prolong the process of house training.
- § Until you know your dog is housetrained, leave him in the crate any time you are not directly supervising him.
- § Scheduled feedings make it easier for you to predict when your dog needs to go out.
- § Take puppies outside every hour or so to relieve themselves (older dogs every couple of hours). Praise heavily if they do, then you can take them in and give them some supervised house freedom. If they don't relieve themselves you should play outside for awhile or return the dog to the crate.
- § After an hour or so of house freedom (less with puppies) you should make one last trip outside then return the dog to the crate.
- § Repeat the play-relieve-crate-relieve pattern throughout the day, every day, for several days to a few weeks. At some point you can begin to prolong the dog's time out of the crate so you can watch to see if the dog will go toward the door when he needs to go out. If he does, immediately praise him and take him out. Don't wait for him to bark or paw the door at first.
- § As the habit to go outside to relieve himself becomes stronger, you can allow your dog more and more supervised house freedom. Unsupervised house freedom should only happen when you are certain your dog is reliably house trained and also reliable about not chewing inappropriate objects etc.

- \$ At some point your dog should feel so strongly about going outside to relieve himself that he will indicate by pawing or barking at the door. If this doesn't happen you can teach your dog to indicate. Call us if you need help with this.
- \$ Dogs can be creatures of habit so prevention is a huge part of house training your dog. If they never have an opportunity to make a mistake, the habit of relieving themselves in the house can be avoided all together and the proper habit of going outside will be very strong. If they do have an accident you have to make sure you remove all scent from the floor or they will be more likely to go in that spot again.
- \$ Timing is also very important. A dog will only associate a reinforcement (positive or negative) with what is on their mind at the time. If you catch them in the act of having an accident, scoop them up and tell them something like "No potty!" as you rush them outside. If they finish up out there be sure to praise them, preferably while they're in the act and it's likely to be on their mind. Before long they should figure out that going inside is not good, but going outside is. If you find the accident after the fact, even just a few seconds, it's too late to do anything about it.
- \$ Dogs are born with the instinct to keep their "den" clean and this is part of what makes it possible to house train them. Never rub your dog's nose in his urine or fecal matter or leave him in a crate that has been soiled because it may break down that instinct and make house training extremely difficult. Paper training may also send a confusing message so we recommend teaching them to go outside from the start. Also, be careful what you put in the crate with your puppy. A towel might seem like a nice soft bed, but it also might soak up urine and allow your dog to soil his crate but still feel clean. This can really prolong the house training process.
- \$ Once your dog learns not to relieve himself in the living room it doesn't necessarily mean he won't go in the kitchen. If your dog is making mistakes, it's because you haven't been clear enough about all the rules yet. Be patient but persistent and your dog will learn.
- \$ If you believe you are doing everything right and your dog still isn't getting it, you might be dealing with a medical issue and a talk with your vet is in order.
- \$ Be very clear and consistent for just a couple of weeks you will enjoy many years of accident free living. Good luck!