

Article 16

House breaking your dog should never involve physical reprimand.

Dear Gus,

My puppy has been soiling regularly in the house. I've corrected him with a rolled up newspaper, even rubbed his nose in the mess, but nothing helps. I know that he knows he is doing something wrong, because now when I come home from work, he hides under the table. Help!

Jerry B., Orange

Jerry,

First off, as hard as it is to believe when you have a situation as frustrating as this one, your dog isn't doing anything to intentionally make you angry with him. Unless a dog is making a play to be the Alpha in the household, they genuinely want to please us and make us happy.

Rather than teaching your dog not to eliminate in the house, you have taught him that something bad (getting hit with the newspaper, having his nose rubbed in a mess) happens when you come home from work. He does not associate the punishment you give him with the fact that he has soiled in the house earlier in the day. The only time a correction is effective is when it is done immediately upon observing an unwanted behavior.

Correction should never involve anything physical, such as a tap to the nose or hitting with the rolled up newspaper. Your puppy's real mother would never correct her offspring in this manner, and neither should his human caregiver. His mother would however, use very tall and strong body posture and a nip to the back of the neck to correct undesired behavior. So you should mimic her corrections with a quick "no" or a "snap" of the training collar only when the behavior happens in your presence.

Now it's time to go back to the basics of housebreaking. Until your pup is completely reliable, he should be left in his crate while you are at work. The dog will associate his crate with his canine den, and view it as a place to relax and sleep. The crate should be large enough for him to lie down in and stand in, but no larger. A healthy dog will not eliminate in its den, so this will stop the messing in the house. If your puppy is reluctant to go into the crate because you have not already crate trained him, you can start associating the crate with good things by feeding him in the crate with the door open, and then increasing the time he is in the crate.

As soon as you arrive home, you should put the leash on your dog, and immediately bring him outside to a designated "elimination area". Take him to this same spot all the time, letting him sniff and explore for five minutes. When he eliminates; praise him verbally, and if you want, with a small food treat. You should also take him out after food or water, upon awakening, and after a play period. When you are home with him, keep him by your side so that if he needs to eliminate you notice the cue and take him right out to the designated area.

You will also need to completely eliminate any lingering odors from the areas in the house where he has already soiled, since these areas now have

"restroom" attached to them. There are a variety of enzymatic products on the market that will eliminate odors effectively, and I strongly recommend that you use one in these areas. Just like your pup will associate the "elimination area" in your yard with doing his business, he now sees (or actually, smells) the "restroom" sign on these areas indoors. Remember, even if you don't smell any odor, your dog does and you need to eliminate these signs completely. I hope this helps!
Gus.

BAC