



## **Richardson Rescue**

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Animal Rescue and Adoption

Contact: Janet Richardson @ 803.684.6865

### **Housetraining**

By Jess Rollins

#### **The most important housetraining rule is to avoid mistakes!**

To housetrain a dog we are relying on the fact that dogs are fairly particular about where they "go" and build strong habits. It is very important to prevent accidents, because every time she relieves herself in the house, she is building a preference for this area. Every time your dog relieves herself in the house, blame YOURSELF (but please be forgiving)! Until your dog has learned where to go potty, she should be under constant surveillance (with her leash tied to your belt if possible or on your lap), in her crate, or tethered on a comfy mat (tether should be used only under supervision).

The crate should be just big enough for her to stand up, turn around and lay down in. If your dog is having accidents in the crate, make sure it isn't too big and remove absorbent bedding.

When you are inside and she is out of her crate, keep her tethered to your waist and watch her constantly for sniffing or circling. Take her out immediately when you see this behavior.

Set a timer to go off every hour (this time can be increased as you progress) so that you don't forget to take her out before nature calls. If she doesn't relieve herself when you take her out and it's been a few hours, take her back in for 15 minutes (under your closest supervision or crated) and then try bringing her back out again. If she \*does\* "go", wait until she is completely finished before praising, feeding a treat and having a little play time together.

#### **Stick to a strict schedule:**

You should take your dog or puppy out many times during the day, especially after eating, playing or sleeping. Feed 2-3 times per day and leave the food down for about 15 minutes per feeding. Your dog can generally "hold it" for its age in months + 1 hr, but no longer than about 8 hours as an adult. The more often you bring your dog outside in the beginning the better because you will minimize the chances for mistakes and give your dog more opportunities for you to reward her for doing what you want. Water can remain down until about 8:00 at night.



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### **Be consistent and keep it simple:**

Until she is reliably housetrained, bring her to the same spot each time, and leave a bit of her waste there. Use this spot only as a potty area, and not for play. Bring her there on leash and say something like “hurry up” when you see her getting ready. As she goes, say nothing so as not to distract her, but when she finishes praise or click, give her a tasty treat and spend 5 minutes playing outside away from the potty area. If she doesn’t go, return to the house, put her in her crate and wait 15 minutes before trying again.

### **“But, what if she goes in the house...”**

Hit yourself on the head with a rolled up newspaper! <grin> If you see your dog relieving itself in the wrong spot, bring her quickly outside and praise her for finishing there. If you find a mess, clean it very well (without her watching you) using an appropriate cleaner.

### **“How can I teach her to tell me when she needs to go out?”**

Hang a bell near the door you use to take her out. Smear a bit of peanut butter on the bell and when she touches it and it rings, instantly open the door. Repeat each time you take her out until she does it without the peanut butter. Now she will be able to tell you when she needs to go outside (or when she just WANTS to go outside...to prevent this from happening, each time she rings the bell take her out for a potty break only. If she begins to play bring her back inside).

### **“Why are toy dogs so difficult to potty train?”**

In my experience, small dogs often take longer to potty train. I’m not sure why this is, but my solution to the problem is to take them out more frequently than you would a large dog. Maximum time without a potty break as an adult should only equal about 4 hours. Many small dogs do very well with a litter box. I prefer this method because this way we can be sure that she can go whenever nature calls, even when it’s a blizzard outside and she doesn’t want to get her toes cold. I prefer this method because this way we can be sure that she can go whenever nature calls, even when it’s a blizzard outside and she doesn’t want to get her toes cold.