

A Puppy's Point of View on Housebreaking

by Kerri Lynch

Kerri Lynch, who shares her life with Starbuck, a Doberman the size of Mt. McKinley, sends us this wonderful story that provides lots of terrific dog training tips. Pass it along to those who are getting a puppy. They will thank you!

I am an 11-week-old puppy, and today I will be going to my new home. After a bath and a lot of brushing and fussing, my breeders have agreed that I am ready. They had a hard time with me when they turned on the hair dryer; that noise scared me to death until I learned it would not hurt me.

My breeders spent a long time telling my new owners about me when they picked me up. They were told to hold and pet me, and reassure me, to keep me calm during the trip home.

They were also given housebreaking instructions to "potty train" me. I was a little concerned when the lady picked me up, because she was a stranger. But she was very nice, and I relaxed and licked her face to tell her I liked her.

Then they took me to the station wagon. It looked scary. My new mistress decided she didn't want any hairs on her clothes, so she put me in back. The back was a strange place with many different odors, and I was busy sniffing when I heard a roar that made me jump. It reminded me of those unpleasant trips to the veterinarian when I was vaccinated.

I was not comfortable enough to lie down, so I stayed standing while the car moved. The swaying and stops and starts made my tummy uncomfortable. I started vomiting. I felt bad, but I was also scared. I didn't understand what was happening. And I still couldn't find a safe spot to lie down. After a while, I relieved myself in the corner. The people stopped and were talking loudly as they cleaned the rug.

"We should have followed the breeder's advice and held the pup all the way home," the man said. After that, the woman held me on her lap, and there were no more surprises.

When we arrived, they brought me into the house to show me off to their children. Of course, that was a mistake, because the breeders had told them to put me outside until I relieved myself so they could praise me and get the idea of housebreaking across to me.

The kids and I had a good time running around the house playing. I had the urge again and relieved myself in the middle of the living room. A few minutes later the lady noticed it and yelled, "Bad dog!" She picked me up and took me outside. I did not understand. I had forgotten what I had done a few minutes earlier. After all, I am just a baby.

The lady left me in the backyard for a long time while she read the housebreaking instructions.



When I got bored I went to the door, but when they ignored me, I barked and barked until they let me in.

They gave me some food, but I was too nervous to eat. I really didn't know these people who yelled so much, and I really wanted to go home to my mother and brothers and sisters. I was thirsty after all that panting from the excitement and the playing, though.

After the lady saw me drink she put me outside. I played with the kids, and after a half an hour the lady got bored and went inside. I stayed outside, played and wet and explored the grounds until I got tired. I went to the door, barked and was quickly let in. Thank goodness I taught them to open the door when I barked. Maybe that would work for other things.

A short time later I needed to go again. I had learned that I'd better not go on the living room carpet, so when nobody was looking, I went to relieve myself. Later when I was playing in the kitchen, I heard the lady call her husband to come and see the mess. She picked me up, showed me what I had done, and called me a bad boy. As she put me out, I wondered why she was so mad; I didn't remember doing anything bad. I heard her husband tell her, "The instructions say to block the pup in the area where you are going to be so you can watch him and put him out in time."

This time she went outside and watched me. While I was walking around sniffing I decided that I would mark this area to remind me and others that it was mine. As soon as I wet, she came running over and pet me, calling me a good boy. I could not understand why she was so excited because just a little while ago she had been angry. Who can understand humans? Maybe she only wanted me to wet outside? Could that be it?

The rest of the afternoon was just fine. They kept me in an area that was blocked off so they could watch me, and every time I started to look for a spot, they took me outside. When I relieved myself outside, they praised me and loved me.

When it was 5 p.m., they took away my food and water. That night, just before going to bed, they put me outside. They decided that I should stay in the bathroom at night. I hated it all by myself, and I wanted company. I started barking and howling to make sure they heard me.

Apparently the howling worked, because they decided that the breeder's housebreaking instructions were right. They took me to their bedroom and put down an old comforter for me to sleep on right next to them, so that when I began to get restless and sniff around, they knew to take me outside and to stay with me and praise me when I finished.

Now that I have learned that she wants me to relieve myself outside, I will try to let her know so she can put me out when I have to go. I hope my story will help other puppies and their owners get started on the right paw.

To help remind new owners, here is a summary of housebreaking instructions:

- ✓ If you take the pup home in the car, a second person should hold him to keep him calm and to avoid motion sickness. A pup left on his own may also get nervous and relieve himself.
- ✓ Put the pup outside after meals and wait for him to relieve himself. Don't get up and leave, or you will miss a chance to praise and shorten the housebreaking period.
- ✓ Praise the pup several times after he relieves himself outside, saying "Good dog."

- ✓ Remove water and food by 5 p.m.
- ✓ Put the pup outside just before bedtime.
- ✓ Keep the pup next to you, either tied near the end of the bed, on the bed, or in a crate. Dogs do not relieve themselves where they sleep. This is the only time I recommend tying a dog.
- ✓ If you followed all the instructions and the pup wakes up at 1 a.m., reassure him and he should go back to sleep. But if he persists, take him outside.
- ✓ If you find the pup had an accident and you did not see him do it, forget it. He will have forgotten it already and you will only scare him.

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