

# Homeward Bound Golden Retriever Rescue

## Golden Rule Training



## Potty Training

### The Golden Rules for Puppy

**Golden Rule Number One:** This is The Most Important Rule – If you don't catch your puppy doing it - then don't punish him for it!

**Golden Rule Number Two:** Praise your puppy when things go right. Don't let this be a situation where your only action is saying "No" when they are caught in the midst of using the wrong area. If they do it right – let them know! Do this by saying “good potty”. Or “good boy” in an up-beat voice, so he knows what he did was a good thing! You can even go as far as giving him a treat when he goes outside and in the right potty place!

### Methods of house training

#### 1. Method

**Potty Pads:** When the puppies are very small (up to 4 months old) you can put down papers or pretreated pads, encouraging them to use these areas for going to the bathroom. The pads are scented with a chemical that attracts the puppy to use them. Whenever you see them starting into their "pre-potty pattern," such as walking around and sniffing the floor, you gently pick them up without talking and carry them over to the papers/pad and then praise them when they go to the bathroom.

When all goes well and they are using the papers consistently, the papers are either moved closer to the door and/or another set is placed outside. The transition is made from concentrating the toilet habits to one spot inside the home to one spot outside the home. Finally, the papers inside are eliminated.

*Note: The only problem with this method is that for a period of time it encourages the animal to eliminate inside the home. In our experience, house training may take longer when this method is used.*

#### 2. Method

**Crate Training:** This is the method we recommend for older puppies and adult dogs. . The reason this works well is that the dog placed in a cage that is just large enough to be a bed and no extra room to potty. Dogs do not like to soil their beds because they

would be forced to lay in the mess. It works, and while in these confines, most pups will control their bladder and bowels for a longer time than we would expect.

A crate has to be large enough for the dog to stand up, stretch and turn around. So you are not buying several crates, simply purchase a cage that will be big enough for him as an adult, but choose a model that comes with or has a divider panel as an accessory. With these, you can adjust the position of the panel so that the space inside the cage available to the pet can grow as he does.

*Note: Using too large of a crate can often cause long term problems. The puppy will go to one corner of the cage and urinate or defecate. After a while, he will then run through it tracking it all over the cage. If this is allowed to continue, the instincts about not soiling his bed or lying in the mess will be forgotten and the puppy will soon be doing it every day when placed in the crate. Now a house training method has turned into a behavioral problem as the puppy's newly-formed hygienic habits becomes his way of life.*

The correct sized crate is important.

### **When is the dog crated?**

- During housebreaking, whenever the puppy is inside the home but cannot be watched, he is placed in the crate. This might be while you are cooking, reading to the children, or even away from the home.
- The last thing you do before you put the puppy in the crate is take him outside to his favorite spot.
- The first thing you do when you take the animal out of the crate is another trip outside.
- No food or water goes in the crate, just a blanket and maybe a chew toy to occupy his time. Overnight is definitely crate time.
- As your faith in the puppy grows, leave him out for longer and longer periods of time.

During the day, a dog should not be crated all day or for 8 hours! Please make sure he gets a break and gets to stretch his legs at least every four hours.

The advantage to using the crate to house training is it stops the animal from messing in the house and it also teaches the puppy something very important; The puppy learns that when the urge to urinate or defecate occurs, he can hold it. Just because the pup feels like he needs to relieve himself, the pup learns that he does not have to immediately. This is thought to be the main reason why puppies that have gone through crate training have fewer mistakes later on as adults.

**3. Method** The last method involves no papers, pads, or crates. However, you would spend 100% of your time watching the puppy. This can work for people who live and work in their homes, retired, or in situations where the owners are always with the animal.

First, you have to identify the potty behavior; what does he do? Turn in circles, squats, makes a noise, what ever the signal is you have to identify it then hurry and get him

outside to his potty area. It is important that the dog is watched at all times and that no mistakes are allowed to occur.

This method has less room for error, as there is nothing like a cage to restrict the animal's urges, nor is there a place for him to relieve himself such as on the papers or pad. When he is taken outside, watch the puppy closely and as soon as all goes as planned, he should be praised and then brought back inside immediately. You want the dog to understand that the purpose for going outside was to go to the bathroom.

Do not start playing with the puppy, or the reason for going outside may not be clear. Praise the puppy for going in the right place. For those with the time, this is a good method. We still recommend having a crate available as a backup when the owners have to be away from the animal.

### **Verbal cues**

Decide what cue you want to use to communicate when and where to potty, in other words, what is the cue you will use consistently? It could be "Potty"? "Go outside"? "Go out"? It is important that the whole family use the same cue to ask the dog to do something, so decide together what cues you will use.

In addition, you need to know what is the dog's signal is as well. It could be he comes to you and barks, goes to the door and scratches to get out. You can even teach your dog to ring a bell to go out! Paying attention to you're dog's signal is important. If you miss the signal and the dog goes in the house, then that accident is on you! Please do not punish your dog for accidents. Simply take them outside and show them again where to potty.

### **When an 'accident' happens**

One of the key issues in housebreaking is to follow **Golden Rule Number One**: If you do not catch your puppy doing it, then do not punish him for it! We do not care what someone else may tell you or what you read, if you find a mess that was left when you were not there, clean it up and forget it.

Discipline will not help because unless you catch the puppy in the act, he will have no idea what the scolding is for. Your puppy has urinated and defecated hundreds of times before he met you. Mom or the human care-giver always cleaned it up. Nobody made a fuss before and the pup will not put the punishment together with something he has done without incident numerous times before.

If you want house training to go quickly, regardless of the method you use, spend as much time as possible with your puppy. Sometimes the solution may be to stay home for a week or so and work with the puppy. Most times that is what it takes to makes sure the puppy knows what he needs to do.

### **ANTICIPATE the need!**

As a general rule, the length of time a puppy can be left confined in his crate without going outside is roughly equal to his age in months:

**2 months old = 2 hours of confinement, then he needs a potty break**

**3 months old = 3 hours of confinement then he needs a potty break**

**4 months old = 4 hours of confinement then he needs a potty break**

**Up to about 6 - 8 months of age, then he should be able to hold it for 8 hours.**

ANY time there is a change in activity, such as after waking, playing, or eating, puppy MUST be taken outside!

## Feeding and house training

The feeding schedule you use can help or hinder housebreaking. You will soon notice that puppies will need to go outside soon after they wake and also within 30 to 40 minutes after eating. Be consistent when you feed the animal so you can predict when they need to relieve themselves. Plan your trips outside around these patterns. All of this may seem simple, and it really is. The keys are that it will take time and you must be consistent. And, of course, you must never lose your temper or even get excited.

## Spontaneous or submissive urination

Puppies may spontaneously urinate when excited. This may be when they first see you, at meeting a new dog, or when they are scared. It is often referred to as **submissive or excitement urination**. Do not discipline the puppy for this, as it is something they cannot control. Simply ignore it and clean up the mess. If you do not overreact, they will usually outgrow this between 4 and 7 months of age.

## Summary

Your new puppy is home and you have started the house training process. This is just as much a part of training as any basic obedience commands. However, mistakes that occur with house training can cause more problems between you and your pet than those encountered with any other form of training. Be patient and stay calm and he will learn the rules.

Sources:

Pet education.com  
The Dog Forum  
Dog Behavior Blog