

Small Dogs Present Special Problems

Small dogs have more than a few special things about them, most good, some not so good. The upside: They're adorable. They're portable. They're usually long-lived. On the downside, they seem to be exceptionally hard to house-train. Everyone looks at a small dog as a perpetual infant; And because of that, people are more tolerant until the house smells!

This lack of consistency on the part of doting humans isn't the only problem. Many small dogs come from puppy farms or other large-scale breeders who simply don't take the time to lay the groundwork that makes house-training easier.

But even a poorly raised dog can usually be trained. You have to start by looking at things from a small dog's point of view, and that can be very hard for people who think their dogs are little people.

For example, you have to make sure your dog can feel safe in the outdoor spot you've chosen for him. The act of elimination is one when a dog's guard is down, and it's important that they feel they're not going to be attacked. And keep the grass short so the dog doesn't feel as if he's hacking through a jungle.

Despite the special challenges the small dog presents, house-training is possible. Once your dog has that safe spot outside, you can teach him to use it with the aid of a schedule, praise, and a dedication to consistency.

Feed on a schedule, and be aware of when the puppy has to go. You must take your dog out after he eats, after play, after any kind of stimulation. Take a very special treat and your happiest voice to the special spot. The moment the puppy's feet hit the ground, get excited. When the deed is done, praise to the heavens and deliver the treat.

Limiting a dog's range in the house helps, too. "Crate-training" is a tool, not a punishment, a cage keeps a dog out of trouble when you can't watch him.

Mistakes are part of the learning process and should never be punished. If you see the dog starting to go in the house, pick him up and run him to that special spot, and praise when the dog finishes up outside. Dogs essentially want to please you; they just need a bit of direction.

Kind Regards,
Scott and Chris