



Good Habits are Hard to Break

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Confinement

Long-term confinement

When you're not at home, you'll want to keep your puppy confined to a fairly small puppy playroom, such as the kitchen, bathroom, or utility room. You can also use an exercise pen to cordon off a small section of a room. This is your puppy's long-term confinement area. It should include:

1. A comfortable bed
2. A bowl of fresh water
3. Plenty of hollow chew toys (stuffed with dog food)
4. A doggy toilet in the farthest corner from her bed

Obviously, your puppy will feel the need to sleep, play, chew, and eliminate throughout the course of the day, and so she must be left somewhere she can satisfy her needs without causing any damage or annoyance. Your puppy will most probably eliminate as far as possible from her sleeping quarters—in her doggy toilet. By removing all chewable items from the puppy playpen—with the exception of hollow chew toys stuffed with kibble—you will make chewing chew toys your puppy's favorite habit, a it is such good habit! Long-term confinement allows your puppy to teach herself to use an appropriate dog toilet, to want to chew appropriate chew toys, and to settle down quietly.

The Purpose of Long-term Confinement:

1. To confine the puppy to an area where chewing and toilet behavior is acceptable, so the puppy does not make any chewing or house soiling mistakes around the house, while you are absent mentally or physically (prevention).
2. To maximize the likelihood that the puppy will learn to use the provided toilet, to chew only chew toys (the only chew-ables available in the playroom), and to settle down calmly without barking (pro-action).

When You Are at Home

Enjoy short play and training sessions hourly. If you cannot pay full attention to your puppy's every single second, put your pup in his Puppy Playpen, where a suitable toilet and toys are available. Or, for periods of no longer than an hour at a time, confine your puppy to his Doggy Den (short-term close confinement area), such as a portable dog crate. Every hour, release your puppy and quickly take him to his doggy toilet before your play/train session. Your puppy's short-term confinement area should include a comfortable bed (if your pup won't chew or soil the bedding), and plenty of hollow chew toys (stuffed with dog food).

It is much easier to watch your pup if he is settled down in a single spot. Either you may move the crate so that your puppy is in the same room as you, or you may want to confine your pup to a different room to start preparing him for times when he will be left at home alone. If you do not like the idea of confining your puppy to a dog crate, you may tie the leash to your belt and have the pup settle down at your feet. Tie the puppy's leash to a heavy piece of furniture, or fasten the leash to an eyehook in the baseboard next to your puppy's bed, basket, or mat. To prevent the chew toys from rolling out of reach, also tie them down.

The Purpose of Short-term Close Confinement:

1. To confine the puppy to an area where chewing behavior is acceptable so the puppy does not make chewing mistakes around the house
2. To make the puppy a chew-toy-aholic (since chew toys are the only chew-ables available and they are stuffed with food) and to teach the puppy to settle down calmly and happily for periodic quiet moments
3. To prevent house soiling mistakes around the house and to predict when the puppy needs to eliminate. Dogs naturally avoid soiling their den, so closely confining a puppy to his bed strongly inhibits urination and defecation. This means the pup will need to relieve himself when released from the crate each hour. You will then be there to show the puppy the right spot, reward him for eliminating in the right spot, and then enjoy a short play/training session with the delightfully empty puppy.

Train Your Puppy to Train Himself

Housetraining and chew toy-training will be quick and easy if you adhere to the puppy confinement plan above, which prevents the puppy from making mistakes and prompts the puppy to teach herself household etiquette. If you vary from the program, you will likely experience problems. Unless you enjoy problems, you must reprimand yourself for any mistakes you allow your puppy to make.

For more information on long and short-term confinement training please read Dr. Ian Dunbar's "After You Get Your Puppy" which is available at the Open Paw Store.