



## The Three “K”s to House Training a New Puppy

By Peter Sanderson - December 2008 ©

I felt compelled to write a short article about house training a new puppy since after endless hours of internet surfing and reading many different books on the subject. I concluded that I might have a formula that is effective and results in having a long-term companion with absolutely no behaviour challenges.

Most articles and books refer to “house training” or “house breaking” as the act of having your new puppy accept that he/she goes outside or to a litter box as opposed to peeing on your floors.

I, on the other hand, do not consider this one act as "house training" or "house breaking". I want far more from my puppy than just learning to pee outside. In five months, I expect the puppy to be free in the house and well behaved. Additionally, I expect that he/she has mastered the schedule, as well as perform basic commands such as sit, come, down and roll over.

I have had no formal education on dog training or behavioural challenges, however, I believe, that understanding a puppy is of great importance and will guarantee success with house training the puppy without any problems. That is the first "K" - Knowing!

I believe the following to be true of a new puppy:

- A puppy CANNOT hold its pee for very long until its bladder is developed, about 16-20 weeks. Knowing this is very important so that we do not have false expectations.
- During the first four months of the puppy’s life, their brain is like a sponge waiting to soak up and learn all of what his/her life will be. Whenever you are not teaching the puppy something, you are wasting this opportunity for the puppy to learn lessons that will serve him/her throughout their life. They learn very little in a cage and they learn absolutely nothing by scolding, hitting or other punitive measures! Placing a puppy’s nose in their pee or poo is like putting a baby’s face in their soiled diaper and expecting them to realize that they should have gone on a toilet.
- Puppies are like babies (I know since my children are twins). They live by a schedule. Once they know the schedule, they will look forward to certain parts that they enjoy the best, such as feeding time, snack time and playtime.
- Dogs like to eat! Much of their life is circled around food. Additionally, dogs in general are avid gamblers. For example, if you start to give a puppy one kibble every time he comes when called, then the puppy will come ever time. Eventually, you may reward the puppy one out of two times, but the puppy will always bet on the fact that there may be a kibble and he/she will place that bet and perform the come command. Knowing this, tells us that every time we place all of

the puppy's food into a bowl at one time, we lose the puppy's attention and have in fact given away all of our important training influence for the rest of the day.

- Puppies like to sleep. They sleep often providing they are given their play and exercise time. Generally, when they sleep, their body metabolism is slower and they will hold their pee for longer periods. I have never seen a puppy pee while it was sleeping.
- Puppies like to be clean! They will not pee where they sleep or where they eat.
- Puppies want to be part of a pack (The Family). They want to please (submit to the will) the head of the pack and they want to determine their place in the pack (where they stand on the totem pole).
- Puppies and dogs are like people when it comes to food. The healthier the diet, the healthier the puppy and therefore less challenges to deal with during the training period. They do not need cookies, bread, toast etc... Snacks should be healthy. We give apples, vegetables and other fruits for snacks and when training.

Knowing these eight puppy basics is the foundation to my training approach. How well you use these facts along with routine and consistency, will determine how successful and how well trained your puppy will become.

### **Preparing for a Puppy:**

Before bring a puppy home, it is important to play through all scenarios throughout the day and night and be prepared with the necessary equipment, toys and food. For example, where will he sleep? Where will he pee outside? Where are the dangers that may harm the puppy? Where will he play? Where will he rest? In addition, where will he eat? Answers to these questions must be considered and action plans created and played through in your mind, prior to puppy's arrival. Doing so will enable you to create your schedule.



Here is was my plan:

- Toys: I made certain that I had a variety of toys to entertain the new puppy and allow him (my puppy was male) appropriate things to chew on in all rooms that he would have access to. That meant purchasing 15 toys. I purchased teething rubber toys, balls, squeaky toys and furry toys. I divided them between my first floor, where he would have most access, the basement and a few in the cages where he would sleep, rest or play while I was busy.
- Cloths: I live in Canada and the puppy will need a jacket to keep him warm on those cold days (Cavalier Puppy Size: Extra Small). In addition, if you intend to walk the puppy on the streets during the winter, you will need boots or be prepared to wash the salt off their paws at the end of every walk. The salt they use for the roads is BAD for the puppy's paws!



- Cages: I purchased two cages, one for my home office where he would be when I worked and one for the main floor where he would be when I cleaned or answered the door. In addition, I purchased a small covered den type cage where he would sleep. This would be next to my bed so he could hear me breath.
- Food: I purchased the puppy food that I would feed him, knowing the importance of not changing his diet too quickly from that of the breeders. There are many great holistic foods available, some with acceptable fillers (rice and barley) and others without fillers at all. Foods with corn and wheat as fillers are, in my opinion, not acceptable. Your dog is not a chicken, why feed it grain.
- I purchased the feeding dish.
- Water: Most processed foods are salty. Make sure your dog has access to water with or shortly after his meal. I had a recirculation-filtered system for my other pets "the watering hole" since tap water is a great concern and depending on the quality of your tap water, may lead to long-term sickness in smaller animals.
- Safety: I went through the house, ensured that loose wires were not readily available for him to chew, there were no poison plants for him to eat and I cleaned up things on the floor that should not have been there in the first place. I looked for possible dangers and eliminated as many as I could.
- Yard: I ensured that my backyard fence was enclosed sufficiently so that the puppy could not perform a Houdini act and escape when I had my back turned.
- Soiling Area: I determined the spots in my backyard where he could do his duty. Most dogs can be trained to go in one area and putting gravel down makes this area easy to clean and hose off.
- Time: I scheduled my work in advance and planned to stay home for as long as I could in order to give my puppy my full attention and get his training off on the right foot. I knew the benefits of this would be tremendous and immeasurable in the weeks, months and years to come.

At this point, I would daydream about having the puppy and establish the "Schedule". I determined the following (as you will notice, it is a full time job at first):

6:45 - Wake-Up and go Immediately Outside  
7:00 - Breakfast  
7:10 - Go Outside Immediately After Eating and Drinking  
7:10 - 7::30 – Playtime on the First Floor While I Make Coffee and Clean Up  
7:30 - Go Outside  
7:30 - 8:00 – More Play/Training Time  
8:00 - Go Outside  
8:00 - 9:30 – In Cage Next To Me While I Work  
9:30 - Go Outside  
9:30 - 10:00 – Play/Training Time  
10:00 - 11:30 – In Cage Next to me While I Work

11:30 - Go Outside  
 11:30 - 12:30 – (Take Nap and Cuddle with Me on the Couch)  
 12:30 - Go Outside  
 12:35 - Snack Time. I Will Sit On the Floor and Feed Him Sliced Apples or Vegetables  
 12:45 - Go Outside  
 13:00 - 14:00 In Cage Next to me While I Work  
 14:00 - Go Outside  
 14:00 - 15:00 Training Time  
 15:00 - 17:00 Play Nintendo Mario Kart with me on the Couch  
 17:00 - Go Outside  
 17:00 - Dinner Time  
 17:10 - Go Outside  
 17:15- 18:30 – Play Time  
 18:30 - Go Outside  
 18:45 - 20:00 – Watch TV on Couch  
 20:00 - Go Outside  
 20:00 - 22:00 – More TV on Couch (Hopefully He Will Sleep)  
 22:00 - 03:00 – In Small Den for Night Sleep. I Will Set Alarm to Get Up and Let Him Out\*  
 3:00 - Go Outside  
 3:00 - 6:45 - In Small Den for Night Sleep.  
 \* I will incrementally set the alarm for 15-minutes later each day until he demonstrates that he can hold his pee the complete night.

### **Bringing the Puppy Home (Reality Check):**

This is where we put our plan to the test. In quality management they guide themselves on a simple approach called “Plan | Do | Check | Act”. In simple terms, it means create a plan, execute the plan, check if the plan is working and act immediately to revise the plan when it is not working (corrective action).



I use this approach entirely. This is what I did for the first week.

Before bringing the puppy in the house, I brought him outside to the planned soiling area. I kept saying “Go Pee-Pee”. This was my term to be used. I waited outside until he did his pee-pee and then gave him a kibble combined with Kisses and a happy dance. This is where the

two other “K”s comes into play. Kibbles and kisses!

I then brought him into the house and began the planned schedule. Now, let us talk about feeding. They say puppies can eat three meals a day until they are 5-6 months old. I choose to feed him one meal at breakfast and one meal at dinner and keep the third meal of kibbles in a zip lock bag in my pocket at all times to be continuously handed out as rewards.



For example, every time he goes pee or poo outside, I give two kibbles and kisses. Trust me, this works! In fact, my puppy named Porthos (after Captain Archer's Dog on the Enterprise) quickly tried to cheat to get more kibbles. He would get into the pee-pee position but not pee and come for a kibble. He would not get any unless he performed. Since the puppy is always hungry, then they are always looking for a reason to get a kibble. Within one week, we had only three accidents in the house and they were my entire fault. After one week, there were no accidents because I had to revise my schedule slightly after noting when he actually performed his pee-pee and poo.

During the playtime, I would throw a ball and say fetch. When he did, he got kibble and kisses. When I called him and he came, he got kibble and kisses. By now, you can see that I am getting Porthos addicted to kibble and kisses, the last two "K"s in my approach.

During snack time, I would sit on the floor and give apple or vegetable pieces but make him sit and stay to get a piece (kibbles and kisses). The reason I sit on the floor is to prevent begging for food when we eat and to train him how to sit. For example, if I am eating an apple, I do not want the dogs barking for a piece. He will learn the word "Snack Time" and wait in the spot where I sit and feed them their snack.

Just to let you know how effective this is, I have an older cavalier, Oddie - 11 years old, and who was trained in this manner. When he smelled the kibbles in my pocket, he went outside with Porthos and me. He went right in front of me where I could not miss him, looked up, did pee-pee and wanted a kibble. He had not had kibbles for this since 1997 (proof they are gamblers)! When it was dark, I would bring a flash light outside so that I would not miss the opportunity to give more legitimate Kibbles and Kisses.

I heard that most puppies cry for the first few nights because they miss their mother and siblings. I think that Porthos was very content and full of love and kisses, so we did not have to go through that at all. He slept in the small den with no crying. During the first week, I moved the alarm up 15-minutes each day for the midnight pee-pee and after 10-Days; he would sleep from 10:00AM to 6:00AM with out waking up.

Porthos is now 11 weeks old and has learned his schedule. He knows sit, fetch and down. He is a joy and is full of love. He looks forward to his meals, snack times and play/training times. He is rarely in a cage and has free roam of the houserooms as long as we are there to supervise him.



I am quite confident that continuing this approach will result in yet another perfect pet in our house. We have a Persian cat, two birds and now two cavaliers. Porthos like all of our animals will never know fear, will never **be hit**, and will only be loved. As you can see by the picture, kindness, kisses and kibbles will serve you better than scolding, punishment or detention!



### **Additional Notes:**

- **Go Out Times:** Obviously, the scheduled “go out” times will be revised each week and will be less and less required. However, the key is to be proactive and not allow the puppy to have an opportunity to make mistakes. If he/she does make a mistake, understand that it is your mistake and do not get mad at the puppy. If you are lucky enough to catch him/her in the act, simply say NO, perhaps stomp a foot to startle him/her then gently take him/her out to the soiling spot and say Pee-Pee or whatever word you use.
- **Biting (Play or Otherwise):** Another important training exercise to be done religiously is to teach the puppy that people’s skin is very sensitive and that they can never place their teeth on human skin. This is far more important if you have children. A dog’s teeth are extremely accurate and controlled by the dog at all times. There is no such thing as an accidental bite during playing or otherwise. The dog always knows exactly where his teeth are and at what pressure they are using. Therefore, this is how I trained Oddie and will train Porthos. Every single time the puppy’s teeth even touch my skin; I pull back and yelp in a high screech (like a puppy). This tells him that he hurt me. Eventually they learn that human skin is as sensitive as tissue paper and that they should never touch skin with their teeth. They may be confused at how sensitive we are but my older dog is so gentle that his teeth are safe around a newborn. This eliminates all liability of having a dog. It ensures that there are zero bite incidents throughout its life. A friend of mine had their son’s eye damaged by a dog bite during playing on the floor. This is unacceptable and avoidable.
- **Leash Training:** Eventually you will get to the final and most difficult training; walking on a leash. This may be difficult at first, especially if you start taking them for walks outside where there are so many distractions, smells and shapes. When you are ready, you can start using a leash inside the house. Get the puppy accustomed to following you using the kibble and kisses approach. Use the leash inside in the same manner as you would during a walk. From one room to another, they must stay by you and not pull ahead. When they perform well give them kibbles and kisses. You will also need kibbles when you first start walking outside. Choking and pulling on a leash will never work (especially for a larger dog).
- **Crate Training:** I always want the puppy to feel secure and happy. When you leave a puppy at the beginning, it has no idea that you will return. It feels abandoned. That is why, when I start training the puppy to be in the cage, I only leave the room for a short period of time at first and then gradually extend the time. I do the same when we go out. First, 20 minutes, then 45 minutes and so on. However, I would never leave longer than they are capable of holding their pee unless they were trained to go in a litter pan or on paper and there has been one/some provided. We do not want to set the puppy up to fail. It also gives mixed messages. If you are trying to get him to go outside and correcting him for doing otherwise, do not leave him with no choice but to pee or poo on the floor. You have made him fail or displease you. He knows he is

not to go on the floor. He will get confused. It is like toilet training a child and scolding them for going in their diaper one minute and then being at the mall or somewhere where they cannot go and telling them it is okay to go in their diaper. Toilet training in this manner is going to take a whole lot longer.

- Totem Pole: Finally, remember that the puppy is always trying to find their place on the Totem pole. They will naturally want to climb to the top if allowed. Therefore, here are some things to be aware of while they grow up:
  - I am not a fan of the tug of war game. It does allow them the opportunity to become stronger and if you happen to let go; they win! The puppy will consider winning a move upwards on the Tatum Pole.
  - I always insist that the puppy go through doors or upstairs after me. I never allow them to jump in front of me and be the first. This will avoid accidents and second; they must learn that you are always first (Number One).

In conclusion, a puppy is the beginning of a friend for a very long time. The more effort you put in at the beginning, the less effort you will need during the majority of his/her life.

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**Porthos and Oddie (Best Friends in 3-Days)**