

All Puppy Bulletin

Subject: "Get Busy" Habits in a Fenced Yard

Puppies should learn to "Get Busy" on leash plus be comfortable being touched while urinating or defecating. Since graduates pick up after their Guide Dogs, it is important to teach puppies to be comfortable with human closeness and touch.

Our goal is to have puppies that will "Get Busy" on command on leash. It is much easier to let a puppy go out into a fenced yard, stand on the patio or watching from the back door while he "Gets Busy", then call him back into the house. However, this behavior is very difficult to change once learned. Not everyone has a fenced yard and a blind person can't see where their Guide Dog defecates, making it difficult to pick up after the dog. Dogs left to their own imagination in a yard, will eat grass, leaves, plants and animal feces. This ingestion can lead to fleas, tapeworm and dietary indiscretion.

Dogs learn through repetition. If a puppy is never or rarely exposed to something in the home where he is raised, he will not be comfortable doing it on a home switch or in a Graduate's home. "Get Busy" is a habit learned at an early age. If you have a fenced in yard and your puppy learns to relieve himself only off leash, he will not be comfortable relieving himself on leash. This problem is easy to avoid by ensuring that your puppy is exposed to "Get Busy" on leash daily.

How do we work with a puppy that already has this problem? The solution is **Patience + Consistency = Success.**

If a puppy has an issue relieving on leash, or the place in the yard that you have chosen as their "Get Busy" spot, be consistent in overcoming this behavior. Remember it takes 3 times longer to unlearn an undesirable behavior but it pays off.

Pick the spot in your yard that you want the puppy to use as the "Get Busy" spot. Take the puppy to this spot every time you think he needs to "Get Busy". The puppy may refuse to relieve himself in this spot, waiting for you to let him off leash. The learning begins when he really needs to go! The important step to success is making sure you spend enough time outside to give the puppy a chance to make the correct decision, thus setting him up for success. If he chooses not to go, return to the house, put him in his crate for a few minutes, then take him out again. Repeat until he goes. When he goes give lots of praise. This enforces where you want him to "Get Busy" every time.

Repeat this method over and over to enforce the desired behavior. It will take time, depending on the age and temperament of your puppy. During this period, some puppies may urinate or defecate on a walk or while exercising, until they learn to "Get Busy" when and where you give the command. If this happens, walk and train the puppy close to the "Get Busy" spot, getting him back to that spot when he

indicates the need to “Get Busy”. Be creative by using your long line during the conditioning period.

Puppy Sitters and Puppy Raisers should communicate any observations when a puppy goes on a home switch. No one can work on a problem, if they don't know it exists.

This process may seem like a lot of work, but remember why you are raising this puppy. A Graduate cannot deal with these bad habits. Along with the gift of sight, give the Graduate the gift of a reliable Guide Dog.