

## House, Crate and Chew-Training

Warren G. Patitz

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*“We have a golden that was so easy to houstrain. But now we also have a dog we took to foster and decided to keep. She was soooo tiny and cute. It didn't amount to much when she had accidents.... I never put her in crate because the golden loved her to pieces.”*

*“Now I am regretting that. She is still small.... like a Chihuahua but she refused to go outside. Chews up everything in site. She is now almost a year old... is it too late to try to get her used to a crate? It is now becoming a problem. She is so cute but a BRAT!”*

*“Not her fault. We work a lot and she has had run of the house. Don't know what to do for sure.”*

*“Is it too late to train her?” - Rita*

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Rita,

This is a *GREAT* question!

Your enquiry is loaded! House-training! Crate-training! Chew-training! Whew! These are all issues that get dogs yelled at, smacked, kicked, abused, relegated to the backyard and/or a chain, surrendered and destroyed. I can tell by the tone of your letter that you don't do that but many dogs do suffer that kind of fate. So much to discuss. Let's start from the beginning....

To answer your question, “Is it too late to train her?” The answer is no, it is not too late.

As with any (house) training matter, however, always have your veterinarian first evaluate your dog for any urinary tract, kidney or endocrine disease that might be compromising their bladder control.

**Successfully integrating an animal into our home is based on realistic expectations.**

Realistic expectations acknowledge that annoying and nuisance behaviors, (eliminating, barking, jumping, chewing, biting, etc.) are NORMAL behaviors for a dog and with understanding and training these behaviors can be modified and directed into a context that is acceptable, (eliminating outside, chewing on an acceptable item, etc.).

The position in which you and your dog find yourselves - a dog who wasn't initially house-trained (trained to eliminate outside of the house), crate-trained (trained to feel comfortable going into and being in a crate) or chew - directed (trained to focus on an acceptable chew object) - is all too common and speaks to the benefits of early training.

**Before we can change the dog's behavior, we have to FIRST change our own behavior!**

The *real* translation to your training question is, "Is it too late for *ME* to provide the opportunities to help Chi Chi succeed at eliminating outside?"

And the good-news answer to this is still, "No, it is not too late!"

With that said, even though you work a lot, a good investment of your time would be to attend a behavior-training program (vs. an "obedience" training program) for yourself and your dog. Avoid any punishment training program. Appreciating how dogs learn can make life a lot easier!

Here are some basics to keep in mind:

1. Dogs are opportunists. They are selfish, ("What's in it for me?!"). In other words, they are going to perform (if able) whatever behavior brings them the highest level of fulfillment or satisfaction at that moment.
2. Like us, they learn by association.
3. Most importantly, they have feelings, and what you want to do is give Chi Chi the association of good feelings with what you want her to do.

Let's start by asking ourselves, "What do I want the dog to do?" Once we have the answer to that, we:

1. Prevent the dog from doing what we don't want her to do by implementing both physical and behavioral boundaries ("...she has had the run of the house," "...chews everything in site"). These boundaries are fences, gates, doors, leashes, crates.
2. Help her perform the behavior we want her to perform, (discipline our self to get her outside on a schedule, excite her about and focus her toward a special chew item) and...
3. Reward that performance genuinely and generously every time she performs that behavior.
4. Once she starts performing the desired behavior willingly, then add a "cue," i.e.: "Go potty now!" "Into your crate pretty girl." "Where's your bone?!"

If we engage in this practice in the spirit as we would if we are teaching a new trick... or working together as a team to get a little closer toward the realization of our goal, our attitude will invite the dog's "buy in" and progress will be made.

Are you familiar with horse-trainer Monty Robert's expression, "Joining up?" In a sense, having an animal in our life offers us the opportunity to mingle our spirit in a "joining

up” with the animal. We can invite the dog to play this (training) game because it is fun, rewarding and safe (*and it will make life a lot easier because we won’t be cleaning up all the messes!*).

The operant ingredients essential for “joining up” (to begin training) with our dog (or any animal), is trust and respect. In order for our dog to trust us, we have to respect him/her. Our personal perspective determines that. To make this easier to understand, consider the dog you brought into your home as a sister or brother. When you view the relationship in this way, relief and a refreshing experience await you.

In the process we have an opportunity to glimpse the world through the dog’s eyes.

As a matter of fact, let’s do take a snap shot look at OUR (collective) human behavior through our (collective) dog’s eyes. No one is stopping us:

*“Those two-legged animals are pretty darn scary! Look at how they treat us! They hit us, yell at us (most everything they vocalize towards us is indiscernible), force us to live in isolation from others of our own species. Some of them make us fight our own kind, then dispose of us in trash bins with our mouth duct-taped shut after being bait for another dog who’s been purposely abused to make them insane, or they might drop us off at a place we’ve never seen before where our patience is pushed beyond the tolerance threshold. When we communicate (with a growl or a snap), ‘Stop!’ ‘Back-off!’ they use that excuse to kill us. They also kill us because there are more of us than there are homes. To top that off they call us their ‘best friend.’”*

Humans destroy millions of “companion animals” a year in this country. As a matter of record, consider that Homo sapiens have killed in excess of 100 million of their own kind in the twentieth century, alone! Animals don’t kill their own kind like that.

Talk about “forgiving.”

Enough reflection, back to the house training...

Let’s visit a few considerations that will make this house-training initiative easier to embrace:

1. Whenever we bring ANY new dog into our home, regardless of the notation on the cage card or adoption paperwork that says “housetrained,” please appreciate that although the dog may have been housetrained in it’s previous environment, it does NOT mean the same behavior will transfer to a new environment. We would do well to start every new dog in our home at “square one” of a housetraining protocol. IF we are going to purposely begin housetraining a dog preexisting in the home, we still need to start at “square one.”
2. The most labor-intensive chore for healthcare workers caring for residents in a long- term care facility is incontinence. Studies indicate that a reduction of this time-consuming chore is realized by establishing a bowel and bladder program

that gives the individual an opportunity to eliminate BEFORE the urge to go. This same principal applies to training our dog to eliminate outside.

3. Remember that if this random behavior of soiling in the house has been allowed in the past; expect an investment of time, patience and persistence to be successful in reversing it. Actually, elimination in the house has been self-rewarding just by the relief of the experience!

Set Chi Chi up to succeed. Think: On a schedule. Bulk in - bulk out. Take her outside first thing in the AM, after breakfast, noon, afternoon, after dinner, before bedtime, after any inside play activity. Remain in a designated small area and IF she potties, reward with a “good girl, a treat AND/OR a walk around the yard, ball chase, whatever. The association you are establishing is “going potty on the grass makes good things (praise, treat) and freedom (walk, ball game, run around the yard, etc.) happen.”

Use a mantra like, “Time to go potty,” put Chi Chi on a lead and go to one spot in the yard where you want her to do her business. Why on lead? If Chi Chi is allowed to wander around and get interested in something else (it’s a Disneyland of smells out there) she will forget her assignment.

Many people will make the mistake of walking and walking and walking the dog until she potties. The dog potties and then is immediately taken inside. The association learned is, “Going potty means I have to go inside, so I am going to ‘hold it’ as long as I can.” Or, walk and walk and dog doesn’t potty, goes back inside and the dog eliminates inside because her mind is off all the wonderful outside distractions.

When you take Chi Chi to the designated outside area and she doesn’t potty in a few minutes, return inside to a stark crate or tether close by where she cannot wander and you can keep vigilant watch of her. Letting her have the run of the house or be out of your v sight upon return will be counter-productive to what you are trying to achieve. Revisit outside in another 5-10 minutes until she does her business and then reward as described.

Allow food and water with discretion before leaving Chi Chi alone during extended confinements.

#### Regarding Crate Training

The crate is an excellent management tool IF used correctly. Crate Training (“crate acclimation” might be a better description of this exercise) is helpful for “house training” because it limits the dog’s access to other areas of the house when you cannot monitor the dog.

The crate should be big enough to allow Chi Chi to stand up and comfortably turn around. You may want to place some soft bedding in there.

The last thing you want to do is shove Chi Chi into the crate, she panics, (“Eeeks, I hate this place!”) and never wants to go in again, (remember the “learning by association?”). If you have a dog who has had a previous frightful experience with a crate and it triggers

a panic attack, best to forget the crate program for now - or if you insist to continue - proceed ever so slowly.

Here is the set up:

Give Chi Chi the opportunity to explore this new and interesting box (crate) without the distraction of any other animals who may be in the house. Be sure she is HUNGRY when she does this!

Place several *small* scraps of meat in the crate with the door closed, (“How do I get in there?”” scratch, scratch). Open door and let her in to get the meat and snort around. Don’t close the door, yet. Chi Chi wanders out. When she is distracted elsewhere, drop in another few small scraps of meat. Continue this through out the day, and over a period of days. You will soon see ChiChi frequently heading to the crate to see what good experience she can re-live in there.

Think about this: One day you walk into your living room and there is a \$50 bill peeking out from under a pillow on the sofa. What do you do? You go over and pick it up because \$50 is pretty darn attractive and you could use the dough. You go about your business and come through the LR again and there is ANOTHER \$50 bill. Wow! You go and pick it up and stuff it in your pocket with the other. Several more passes through the LR and you keep glancing over to the couch in hopes finding another bill because you like the experience of pocketing \$50 and go over to satisfy your money-hunger. Later on you see nothing, so you go over and lift up the pillow. There it is! Another time you go over and there’s nothing. Then the next time \$100 bill!! Guess what you do every time you pass through the house?

Have someone help you with this exercise:

Ask your helper to restrain a hungry Chi Chi while she sees you place some high-value treats in her crate. The other person releases her and she races to the crate. AS she is racing to the crate you are saying a cue phrase like, “Into your house,” “Into your crate,” (or whatever you are comfortable saying). It is REALLY helpful to associate your cue in concert with the action of her racing with excitement to the crate. This is what will lead you to successfully prompting her to the crate because you will have rehearsed it with 100% compliance.

Getting Chi Chi to like STAYING in the crate:

Scatter on the floor of the crate a variety of little morsels for Chi Chi to gobble up and as she is doing so, close the crate door. When she is done snarfing up the food and smelling the crate floor and BEFORE she gets anxious, open the door and ignore her. She will probably wander out on her own and probably return. Praise her with your voice every time she wanders INTO the crate on her own volition.

Repeat, but this time latch the crate door and go to the other side of the room. Return. Repeat and go out of site, peeking in so you can return and let her out BEFORE she goes into a fit or barks. No fanfare. If your timing is off and she gets into a fit before you initiate your return, return ONLY when she is quite. You will start out actually leaving

the room for only seconds. Over a period of days and weeks you will s l o w l y tease out the duration of time she is content in the crate before you return.

It is probably best to not reward her for coming out of the crate because you really want her to experience the high-value reinforcement being IN the crate. Her reward for being composed in the crate is your opening the crate door for access out.

#### Taking this a step further...

Get one of those hard rubber Kong's you've probably heard about and smear the inside with some cream cheese, cheese whiz or whatever she will work hard at sticking her tongue in there to get it out. (Remember, you do not want to be introducing this to Chi Chi after a big meal. You want her HUNGRY; otherwise, you have no leverage). Give her one or two licks and put it away for a while. What you have just done is increased the value of this delicious thing. ("Hey, why'd it go away? I want more!"). Later, bring it out and repeat.

Next, prompt a hungry Chi Chi into the crate and give her the loaded Kong. Close the crate door and leave for 15 seconds and return, open the crate door and remove the Kong, ("Hey, I was just getting into this thing." "Why'd you come back so soon?!"). Repeat and return after 45 seconds, etc. You might also leave her with a favorite chew item to which she is addicted (see below). You can also smear (meat) grease on a hard rolled rawhide or something similar. Avoid using rawhides that are tied in knots. They are choke hazards.

The idea is to make the crate a desirable place to be where great things happen and if the dog's mind is so absorbed in satisfying herself, attention to your departure is minimal.

It is helpful for the dog to NOT associate crating with being left alone for hours on end. That will put a negative spin on her wanting to go into the crate at all, (into the crate = long isolation). Brief times in the crate while you are home will be helpful to desensitize the dog to this perception.

IF your dog has a house-soiling issue and you need to leave her isolated for an extended period of time, the crate should be large enough so she can use one end of it (on some paper). Before crating her, be sure she is given the opportunity to eliminate outside and limit how much food and water she is allowed prior to crating.

#### Considerations about isolation to help understand why dogs will have separation anxiety (SA) issues.

Separation anxiety is a panic attack (emotional response) associated with being left alone.

1. Dogs are pack animals and when the pack leaves, no one stays behind and says, "I'll stay home." It is contrary to their genetic wiring. This is why a person is doing their dog companion a BIG favor helping them to feel comfortable being

left alone. There is some suspicion that some breeds are more predisposed to SA than others.

2. Dogs who have been surrendered (and resurrendered) will often have more SA than others. Why? Consider that this very social and sensitive animal is bonded to someone. The person goes out of sight - leaving the dog in the care of a stranger or a scary facility where they are prodded, stuck, and maybe put in an enclosure with a noise level higher than OSHA's tolerated exposure limits. So when the new (adopter) person in their life goes out of sight, they might be thinking, "Oh my god, it can't be happening again!" and begins to freak out, salivating, digging at either the crate door, the doorway woodwork or drywall. For people with dogs needing detailed help with SA issues, a good resource is: I'll Be Home Soon! How to Prevent and Treat Separation Anxiety by Patricia B. McConnell, [www.dogwise.com](http://www.dogwise.com).

#### Soiled Flooring:

Pre-existing soiled areas on rugs or flooring where she has previously eliminated will be a magnet for her to return and repeat the deed. These areas need a THOROUGH cleansing and odor neutralizing with a product specifically designed for this purpose. An outstanding product for this is DooDoo Voodoo, created by local entrepreneur and animal advocate, Eric Smith. You can learn more about this product and local dealers at: [http://www.doodoovoodoo.com/main\\_page.htm](http://www.doodoovoodoo.com/main_page.htm).

#### Chewing:

Although your primary question wasn't about destructive chewing, let's talk about it because it can be expensive, annoying and even put the dog at risk.

Remember our template?

"What do I want the dog to do?" Once you have the answer to that, you:

1. Prevent the dog from doing what you don't want her to do by implementing both physical and behavioral boundaries ("...she has had the run of the house," "...chews everything in site"). These are fences, gates, doors, leashes, and crates.
2. Help her perform the behavior you want her to do, and...
3. Reward it heavily every time she performs that behavior.

We really can't stop something that is part of what a dog does, but we can redirect it. Remember our question? "What do I want the dog to do?" Answer: "Chew on a specific item."

Experiment and find what chew bone winds Chi Chi's clock and make that the most exciting thing ever, spit on it, rub it under your armpit, and pretend you really like it too. (If you have it and like it - Chi Chi usually will want it, too!) Get Chi Chi excited about it. Throw it in the air and catch it and when you know she's pumped about it, have her sit, and either give it to her or throw it for her to chase. If there is some snarliness with another dog in the home about bones, practice this with each dog independently.

The problem with lots of chew bones and toys lying around is that it becomes harder for the dog to discriminate what is acceptable and what is not. Having one or two special items will make it easier to distinguish.

If you find Chi Chi chewing on an item, interrupt with an “eh, eh” and immediately and happily redirect/provide for her the acceptable item with a, “Here, this is yours.”

O.K. We’ve covered the basics. This is not meant to be an exhaustive review of how to address these issues - but it is a foundation from which you can start. I am sure there are excellent variations on the theme.

Now that you have the basics, it is just a matter of executing them.

Also, you now have the experience that enables you to encourage others about the benefits of early-house and crate-training, regardless of how cute and tiny their dog!

Thanks again for the great question and good luck! I know you can do it!

~ Warren

