

CFR Secrets for Success

Greetings Puppy Raisers!

Our next edition of CFR Secrets for Success is below. You can also find the PDF on the Forms page at www.guidedogs.com/forms. As you know, each month we are highlighting specific training techniques and management plans designed to support your ongoing work to prepare your puppies for formal training. We suggest that you keep these communications with your manual for future reference.

We hope you enjoy this edition!

Anne, Deana, Barb, Tami, Jim, Rick, Pat, Celeste and Sandi

Relieving Q&A

Why is it considered an accident if my puppy indicates the need to relieve if I can make him wait for a moment?

A graduate needs to have a dog that will take a given opportunity to relieve when a proper relieving area or “doggie bathroom” is presented. The grad of course will adjust to the dog’s biological need but is imperative that he has a dog that is on a dependable schedule and utilizes scheduled “coffee breaks” to take care of business. It becomes a work disruption for a dog to relieve *or ask to relieve* when working just as it is a disruption in a classroom setting for a student to excuse himself to use the restroom just after recess!

Why shouldn’t I let my puppy tell me when he needs to go outside?

When first housebreaking your puppy you will be frequently taking him out to relieve due to his bladder and bowel immaturity. As his body matures, these opportunities will become less frequent. The goal is to teach your puppy to wait until he is given an opportunity and that he needs to relieve each time he is given that opportunity. Too frequent relieving opportunities leads to a pup not “producing” when offered. Regularly scheduled relieving opportunities, becoming less frequent as he matures, are highly preferred. All growing pups are at risk of occasional digestive upsets; these and diet changes can cause them to occasionally be off-schedule. It is OK to respond to your dog subtly asking/signaling to go out (no ringing of bells, barking or other prompts please) but make sure he really needs to relieve and is not just wanting a change of scenery!

If I am on a two-mile hike, is it okay for me to give my puppy a relieving opportunity?

Guide work can involve a lot of walking and we need to prepare puppies for this. Your puppy should be relieved at home first so he will be “empty” and not need to relieve on the hike or any walk for that matter. We do not want to pattern dogs to be exercise-induced relievers. I

suspect most handlers do not stop to relieve themselves on a hike but likely take care of business before setting out! If you think your pup cannot walk two miles without relieving then take him for shorter walks and don't attempt a distance beyond the level to which he is gradually trained to hold himself.

If my puppy relieves on walks, how am I suppose to exercise him if I was told not to take him on walks until he is accident free?

Puppies pattern behavior very quickly. If your pup has a pattern of relieving on walks you will be asked to refrain from walks while we retrain the relieving process and set the puppy up for success. During this period of "house arrest" the pup is given the chance to successfully relearn doing his business when asked, without confusion.

After he has been relieved appropriately in the designated relieving spot you can play tug or let him have an opportunity to play with a Jolly Ball to help satisfy his exercise needs. You may need to get creative as both of you will likely miss the neighborhood walks; however it is very important for the puppy not be put in a situation where he will fail and have another accident while he is establishing new habits. Remember that house arrest is not meant to be punitive or long term but rather an opportunity to relearn proper relieving habits. Walks can be gradually re-introduced once good relieving habits are established.

I really don't want my puppy to have an accident but I am worried he will go in a store, why can't I relieve him prior to going inside?

The primary "doggie bathroom" should be at home. He should be relieved prior to leaving home. Raisers who offer an opportunity to relieve each time before going into a store risk creating a situation of asking the puppy to relieve over-frequently. Too frequent relieving opportunities leads to the puppy not "producing" when offered and poor relieving habits. If you are worried that your puppy is immature and you want to avoid having an accident in a business, take him fewer places until he is ready to hold himself longer. Having an additional handler who can just wait at the store entrance with the puppy, while you shop for example, is still good socialization and avoids risk of accidents.

My puppy urinated on an outing but he wasn't wearing his jacket. If he isn't "on duty" why is that an accident?

Pups need to learn to only relieve when given the cue/command to "Do Your Business". The fact that a puppy is not in jacket does not mean he can relieve at will. Remember the jacket only identifies the puppy to the public and should not be used as a deterrent for poor behavior. Good manners are the same 24/7: no relieving without permission, no mouthy behavior, no jumping on people etc. whether or not the puppy has a jacket on!

If I don't take my puppy out because I am afraid he will have an accident, how is he supposed to get socialized?

Socialization is a slow process. Once fully relieved at home your puppy is free to go out and about as dictated by his readiness for socialization. Over-socialization creates many relieving issues and puts a puppy in a situation that he may not be ready for.

My puppy takes forever to poop, how long should I give him to go before I just put him in a crate?

We recommend 3-5 minutes maximum. If the puppy were not distracted we would expect him to relieve within the first minute or so. The key is to keep him sniffing and circling – if the puppy is standing and staring off into space no amount of time will get him to relieve. Puppies that don't relieve should be put back into the crate (where they can't have an accident) and given another relieving opportunity later. Keeping a relieving log can really help you understand your pup's relieving patterns and gives you the information needed to help him build good habits.

My puppy will go on grass easily so that is what I use when I am out and about, why is that not desirable?

Many graduates need to relieve their dogs on hard surfaces while at work or traveling. It can be difficult to find a grassy spot each time the guide needs to be relieved. Your puppy comes to you being most familiar with relieving on cement. It is much easier to just maintain this pattern; once puppies get used to relieving on grass they can become pickier about their relieving surface. When the dogs return for training they are relieved on cement so it helps them to maintain that familiarity throughout puppyhood.

My puppy pees every time I take him out; sometimes it is only a quarter size puddle. Is this what my aim should be?

It's good that your puppy understands what you are asking him to do. However, it seems that you are giving your puppy too many relieving opportunities and he needs to learn to hold himself for longer periods.

At what age should I expect my puppy to be accident free?

Puppies should have no more accidents after they are fully housebroken (usually by 4-5 months.) Once housebroken any more than one or two accidents constitutes a relieving problem and your leader should be consulted immediately before the bad habit becomes entrenched. Remember preventing accidents is the key!