

Housetraining an Italian Greyhound

This is the biggest stumbling block to successfully sharing your life with an Italian Greyhound. The source of the stumbling block is “owner error”. Improper training, lack of routine and inconsistency are the main causes of “owner error”. Dogs cannot teach themselves; it is up to us to give them guidance, support and rewards along with patience and understanding. Understanding the Breed is paramount to a successful, life-long potty routine. Italian Greyhounds dislike cold, wet weather so it is advised to have both an outdoor and indoor routine. Even if your IG has access to a doggy door having a “back-up” plan will be a bonus.

GENERAL RULES

Be consistent..... Be consistent.....Be consistent..... Be consistent.....

Dogs need and like to have a routine. Once you establish a routine, follow it; do not deviate; be consistent. This is a “life-style”, not a temporary situation. Even with a well monitored routine Italian Greyhounds respond best with “reminders and rewards”. Whether your dog is 6 months, 6 years or 16 years old he/she will always need reinforcement and praise. A young dog’s bladder is small so he/she will need to eliminate more frequently; a senior dog’s bladder muscle can weaken with age so he/she may also need to eliminate more often.

Always give your dog the opportunity to eliminate first thing upon waking and the last thing before bedtime. Feed your dog at the same times each day; this will help to establish his/her body’s routine. Dogs should be allowed to eliminate within 15 minutes of eating. The age of your dog dictates an appropriate feeding schedule; young dogs and senior dogs benefit from multiple small meals while young adult and adult dogs do fine with an a.m. and p.m. feeding.

Positive reinforcement is the most effective way to reinforce the behavior you want. After your IG eliminates in the appropriate area (inside or outside) a reward of verbal praise or hug, even a small treat will help reinforce his/her behavior. Do not correct or reprimand your IG for eliminating in the wrong area if you have not seen the mistake take place; just clean it up.

Controlling your IG’s access to areas inside your home is the first step in establishing a routine. Never give an Italian Greyhound unsupervised access to run free within the home whether you are home or not. Establish a “dog area” such as a bathroom, laundry room, a section of a kitchen or family room. Child gates can be used to “create” a dog area or an x-pen can be set up. The dog’s area should be un-carpeted. While crate training is important it should only be used for short periods of time. If you work outside the home you need to establish an area where your dog can have room to move about, play, have

water and an area to eliminate in that is not close to its bed, blanket and toys. It should be a “safe-place” to live while waiting for you to return home; it should not be a “prison”. Another “tool” for training a new dog is “tethering or lease bonding”. This technique is often used for puppies but is also helpful in bonding with a new dog of any age and a good way to always know where your IG is.

Potty Options (outdoors / indoors)

Your living situation will determine your potty options. Condos/Apts with outdoor space such as a deck or patio that is fenced and secure provides a good area to create an outdoor bathroom for your IG. If the area is covered, a grass patch, potty loo, litter box or even potty pads can be used. An umbrella or tarp can create a dry covered area. If you do not have secure outdoor space you will want to create an indoor bathroom area and then as a second option you can train your dog to eliminate on leash. Homes with a secure, fenced yard (five feet minimum) can use the outdoor space as a primary option if the dog has access throughout the day; if not an indoor bathroom area will be needed as well.

Indoor potty options are pads (disposable and/or washable), dog litter boxes or a pet loo / potty patch system which uses an artificial grass product.

A belly band (male dogs) or doggie diaper (female dogs) can be helpful in training your dog and to help control “marking”. Both male and female IGs can be “markers”. A belly band or diaper should only be used for short periods of time and should be changed frequently to help prevent a urinary tract infection. They can also be used for dogs who are incontinent due to age or illness.

Success

Success is possible; it is a life-style commitment but if an Italian Greyhound is the right breed for you the effort is worth it.

