

Ringing the Bell to Go Outside

(For housetraining your dog)

Your dog needs a way to communicate that he /she needs to go to the bathroom.

First, you need a few things:

1. A single "jingle bell" on a string long enough for your dog to touch it with his nose when hung from a door knob. (If you have a really small dog, then purchase a hotel desk bell that sits on a counter - Staples has them for \$5.00.)
2. Food treats near the door (so your reinforcements will be readily available).

There are two different methods to train this exercise - both work well.

Method One (this first is my favorite) This method has two parts:

First: You will teach the dog a "targeting" behavior. Use the palm of your hand first. Have a bag of treats ready and your clicker too. Put your right hand out with your fingers facing the floor and visible to dog (you can rub a bit of hot dog onto the palm if you like). Once your dog sniffs your palm, then click and treat (with your other hand, of course). When your dog touches his nose to your palm any time you ask (you have done this at least 30 times and put it on cue), then the next step is to hold the bell by the string at nose height and ask the dog to "touch" it. As soon as he rings the bell with his touch, c/t and jack pot. Now do this 20 times. Hang the bell by the string from the door handle low enough so the dog can easily touch it with his nose, ask for "touch" and then reward when he touches the bell hanging from the knob.

Second: Next we tie this behavior to going out. When you think your dog might have to go out say something like "do you have to go out?" As your dog heads towards the door, say "touch". Your dog should touch bell. If he forgets then ring it your self or just point it out to him ask again. Once he touches (ringing the bell), then give a treat and let your dog out. After you have done this 20 times, the dog is going to "ring" the bell himself. When you hear him ringing it on his own, yell out "Yes!!!" And ask, "Do you have to go out?" Let your dog out and give treat *only* if he goes to the bathroom. Make sure you put your dog on a time schedule - 2 minutes to go to the bathroom once he has been let out after ringing the bell. If he doesn't do his business in that time, put him in his crate when you come back into the house or make him lie down for 2 minutes. Otherwise you will end up with a dog that rings the bell to go out side, but doesn't need to go to the bathroom.

Method Two:

Decide on what bell you are going to use, then put it in a place so dog can get to it. Now, when your dog might need to go out ask, "do you have to go out?" When your dog gets to the door, YOU "ring" the bell. Next time you feel your dog needs to go out, again ask, "do you have to go out?" and go right to the door. Then at the door, use your finger to almost touch the bell luring the dog's nose to the bell and let him ring it. After doing this several times the dog should do it on his own. When your dog looks and nudges at it say "YES" and give him a treat. Let the dog out. Once he has gone to the bathroom, reward the dog again. I would start only allowing the dog 5 minutes to go to the bathroom. If he doesn't do anything, then put him back in crate or make him lie down for 2-3 minutes by your side. Now at some point the dog will on his own 'ring the bell'. You must get up and praise him. Give two treats the first time dog does it by himself and ask, "do you have to go out" and take the dog out. Once the dog understands to 'ring the bell' you will no longer have to give it a treat just letting it out will be enough. REMEMBER DOGS DO WHAT WORKS!