



RINGING A BELL

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"Clancy" was a 9 month-old Irish Setter who, like all other dogs, had a way of letting his owners know when he had to go potty. Unfortunately, although some dogs will bark and some will whine; some will pace and some will start sniffing; some will go to the door and some will walk in expectant circles; Clancy's only "signal" was to give his owners The Look. "The Look" was a brief sideways glance toward the door, accompanied by a slight head-tilt. Very cute, but also very easy to miss – and we all know what happens when our dogs' signals go unnoticed!

You say you can never tell when your dog needs to go potty? No worries. You can teach her to ring a bell to let you know that she wants to go out, and it's easy! Here's how:

- 1) Purchase a bell. (The louder the better. Think cowbell or sleigh bell rather than dainty little wind chime.)
- 2) Use a ribbon to hang the bell from the door that leads to your dog's outdoor restroom. The bell should fall at or just below the level of your dog's nose.
- 3) When it's time to go outside, gently swing the bell so that it taps your dog's muzzle.
- 4) Immediately praise the dog and open the door.
- 5) Repeat steps 3-4 every time your dog goes outside for 7 days.
- 6) On the 8th day, gently move the bell so that it stops swaying just in front of your dog's nose. If your dog extends her muzzle to touch the bell, you are ready to proceed. If not, repeat steps 3 and 4 for another day or two and then try again.
- 7) Gradually assist your dog less and less when it's time to ring the bell. By the 14th day, you'll probably be able to stand at the door and wait for your dog to ring the bell all by herself.
- 8) Throughout the process, should your dog ring the bell when you're not standing right near her, it's very important that you immediately stop whatever else you're doing, praise her and open the door for her – even if you're sure she doesn't have to go potty! The bell's tone should *always* mean that the door is about to open.
- 9) Make sure the door never, ever opens unless the bell rings first...no matter who's about to leave. The key success is consistency.

It usually doesn't take very long for a dog to form a strong association between the sound of the bell and the opening of the door. Once that association has successfully formed, most dogs become expert bell-ringers. Remember, though, that patience is truly a virtue and that the learning process is smoother when the "learner" is having a good time. Be generous with the verbal praise when the dog rings her new bell, even if you strongly suspect she's rung it by accident!

Good luck!

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