

## How to Housetrain Your Dog or Puppy

Housetraining your dog or puppy calls for vigilance, patience, plenty of commitment and above all, consistency. By following the guidelines outlined below, you can minimize house-soiling accidents. Virtually every dog, especially puppies, will have accidents in the house but the more consistent you are in following the basic housetraining procedures, the faster your puppy or dog will learn acceptable behavior. It typically takes 4-6 months for a puppy

to be fully housetrained, but some puppies may take up to a year. Size can be a predictor. For instance, smaller breeds have smaller bladders and higher metabolisms requiring more frequent trips outside.



### Establish a Routine

Like babies, puppies do best on a regular schedule. The schedule teaches them that there are times to eat, time to play and times to potty. Generally speaking, puppies can control their bladder one hour for every month of age. If your puppy is 2 months old they can hold it for about 2 hours. Going beyond the time they can reasonably be expected to hold their bladder guarantees accidents so if you work outside the home you may consider having someone come over to let your puppy out every 2 hours. Bring your puppy out frequently- at least every 2 hours- and immediately after waking up, during and after playing, and after eating and drinking.

Pick a bathroom spot outside and always take the puppy on a leash to that spot. While your puppy is eliminating, use a word or short phrase like “go potty” that they will learn to associate with the act of eliminating. Eventually you will be able to use that same phrase or word to remind them to go. Save long walks and playtime for AFTER the puppy has eliminated.

Reward your puppy every time they eliminate outdoors. Use praise or a small training treat- but remember do so immediately after they have finished, not after you’ve returned inside. This step is vital because rewarding your dog for eliminating outdoors is the only way to teach them what is expected of them. Puppies are easily distracted so make sure to wait and reward them after they have finished.

Put your puppy or dog on a regular feeding schedule. What goes into a puppy on schedule will come out on a schedule too. Depending on age, puppies need to be fed 2-3 times a day and feeding them at the same time every day will make it more likely that they will eliminate at consistent times as well.

Pick up your puppy’s water bowl about 2 ½ hours before bedtime to reduce the likelihood that they will need to go potty during the night. Most puppies can sleep for 7 hours without having to eliminate.

If your puppy does wake in the night, don’t make a big deal out of it otherwise they may think it’s play time and have a difficult time going back to sleep. Turn on as few lights as possible, don’t talk to or play with your puppy and take them out to do their business and bring them straight back to bed. Praise for eliminating outside in the night should be done quietly and without fanfare.

## Supervise Your Puppy

Vigilance is key! Don't give your puppy an opportunity to soil in the house by keeping a close eye on them for signs that they need to potty. Close off a smaller section of your home that puppy has access to reduce the places your puppy can hide and soil. Consider tethering your puppy to you or a piece of furniture in sight with a leash so that you can see puppy at all times. Watch for signs that your puppy may need to potty such as barking or scratching at the door, squatting, restlessness, sniffing around or circling. When you see these signs bring your puppy immediately to their bathroom spot outside. If they eliminate, praise lavishly and reward them with a treat immediate after. Until your puppy is reliably housetrained you should treat your yard like any room in the house and keep them on a leash so that they eliminate in the area you have chosen. As your puppy learns that pottying is done outside you can give them access to more areas of your home.

## Confine Your Puppy When You Can't Supervise Them

When you are unable to supervise your puppy, restrict them to a small area like a crate, kennel, or exercise pen. You can also section off a small room like a bathroom with baby gates. The space should be just big enough to comfortably stand, lie down, and turn around but small enough that they won't want to eliminate there. Dogs have a strong instinct to den so properly crate training your puppy or dog will make them feel safe, secure, and comfortable and isn't mean or inhumane.

## Oops! Mistake Happen.

Take mistake in stride and should be expected as part of the learning process. If you find evidence but didn't see the act just clean it up without drawing attention to it. Do not punish your puppy for accidents as it's too late to administer a correction at that time. Rubbing your puppy's nose in the soiled area, taking him to the spot, and scolding him or any other type of punishment will only teach them to be afraid of you or eliminating in your presence. Punishment can often do more harm than good.

If you catch your puppy in the act, interrupt them (but be careful not to scare them) by making a startling noise or saying "OUTSIDE" and bring them immediately to their outdoor bathroom spot. Praise and give them their treat if they finish eliminating there.

Make sure to clean soiled areas thoroughly as puppies are highly motivated to eliminate in areas that smell like urine or feces. Sometimes cleaning with ordinary household cleaners isn't enough to remove the smell for highly sensitive canine noses so check with your veterinarian for recommendations for enzymatic cleansers. Restricting access in the home is an important step to reducing accidents in the house. Allowing frequent accidents in the home can confuse a puppy about where they should be eliminating and prolong the housetraining process.

## Make Plans When You're Away

A puppy under 6 months of age cannot be expected to control their bladder for more than a few hours at best. If you have to be away from the home for more than 4 or 5 hours a day you should arrange for someone like a responsible neighbor, close friend or relative or a professional pet sitter to come and take your dog out for potty breaks. If you train your puppy to go on pee pads or paper be aware that this will prolong the amount of time required to fully house train your dog and may result in a life-long surface preference which may lead them to

eliminate on any paper they find laying around. If you need to pad or paper train your dog do so by designating a separate place to eliminate. If confining in a small area, separate the space into a place to sleep, a place to play and a place to eliminate.