

Housetraining your Puppy

Contrary to popular belief, housetraining a puppy requires far more than a few stacks of old newspapers. It calls for vigilance, patience and plenty of commitment. By following the procedures outlined below, you can minimize house soiling incidents, but virtually every puppy will have an accident in the house, and more likely, several. It's safe to expect this, it is part of raising a puppy. The more consistent you are in following the basic housetraining procedures, however the faster your puppy will learn acceptable behavior. It may take several weeks to housetrain your puppy and with some of the breeds, it may take longer.

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Section 1: Establish a Routine

Like babies, puppies do best on a regular schedule. Take your puppy outside frequently, at least every two hours and immediately after he wakes up from a nap, after playing and after eating or drinking.

Praise your puppy lavishly every time he eliminates outdoors, you can even give him a treat but remember to do so immediately after he is finished eliminating, not after he comes back inside the house. This step is vital, because rewarding your dog for eliminating outdoors is the only way he will know what is expected of him.

Pick a toileting spot near the door and always take your puppy to that spot using a leash. Take him out for a longer walk or some playtime only after he has eliminated. If you clean up an accident in the house, take the soiled rags or paper towels and leave them in the bathroom spot. The smell will help your puppy recognize the area as the place he is supposed to eliminate. While your puppy is eliminating, use a phrase like "go potty" that you can eventually use before he eliminates to remind him what to do.

Put your puppy on a regular feeding schedule and feed him a high-quality diet to make housetraining easier.

Depending on their age, puppies usually need to be fed two to three times a day. Feeding your puppy at the same times each day will make it more likely that he will eliminate at consistent times as well and that makes housetraining easier for both of you.



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Section 2: Keep Your Eyes Peeled

Don't give your puppy an opportunity to soil in the house; keep an eye on him whenever he is indoors. You can tether him to you with a six-foot leash or use baby gates to keep him in the room where you are. Watch for signs that he needs to eliminate like sniffing around or circling. When you see these signs immediately grab the leash and take him outside to his bathroom spot. If he eliminates, praise him lavishly and reward him with a treat.

Section 3: Confinement

When you're unable to watch your puppy at all times, he should be confined to an area small enough that he won't want to eliminate there. The space should be just big enough for him to comfortably stand, lie down, and turn around in. You can use a portion of a bathroom or laundry room blocked off with baby gates. You may also want to consider crate training your puppy and use the crate to confine him. Your puppy has spent several hours in confinement, you will need to take him directly to his bathroom spot as soon as you let him out, and praise him when he eliminates.

Section 4: Oops!

Expect your puppy to have accidents in the house while toilet training – here's what to do when that happens:

- When you catch him in the act of eliminating in the house, do something to interrupt him for example make a startling noise (however be careful not to scare him). Immediately take him to his bathroom spot, praise him and give him a treat if he finishes eliminating there.
- Do not punish your puppy for eliminating in the house. If you find a soiled area, it's too late to administer a correction. Just clean it up. Rubbing your puppy's nose in it, taking him to the accident site and scolding him (or any other punishment) will only make him afraid of you or afraid to eliminate in your presence.
- Cleaning the soiled area is very important because puppies are highly motivated to continue soiling in areas that smell like urine or feces.

It's extremely important that you use the supervision and confinement procedures outlined above to prevent the number of accidents. If you allow your puppy to eliminate frequently in the house, he will get confused about where he is supposed to eliminate which will prolong the housetraining process.

Section 5: Pee-Pads (Paper) Training

A puppy under six months of age cannot be expected to control his bladder for more than a few hours at a time. If you have to be away from home more than four or five hours a day, this may not be the best time to get a puppy, instead you may want to consider an older dog who is able to comfortably wait for your return.

But if you are already committed to having a puppy and must be away for long periods of time, you will need to make arrangements for someone such as a responsible neighbor or a professional pet sitting service to take him outside to eliminate.

The alternative is to train him to eliminate in a specific place indoors. Be aware however that doing so can prolong the process of housetraining. Teaching your puppy to eliminate on pee pads (or newspaper) may create a lifelong surface preference meaning that even as an adult he could eliminate on any newspaper lying around the house.