



BEHAVIOR
SERIES

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. Expect this—it's 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 smaller breeds, it might take longer.

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's 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'll know what's expected of him.

Pick a bathroom 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 word or 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 three or four times a day. Feeding your puppy at the same times each day will make it more likely that he'll eliminate at consistent times as well, and that makes housetraining easier for both of you.

Keep Your Eyes Peeled

Don't give your puppy an opportunity to soil in the house; keep an eye on him whenever he's 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.

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. Or you may want to crate train your puppy and use the crate to confine him. (Be sure to learn how to use a crate

continued on reverse side

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humanely as a method of confinement.) If your puppy has spent several hours in confinement, you'll need to take him directly to his bathroom spot as soon as you let him out, and praise him when he eliminates.

Oops!

Expect your puppy to have a few accidents in the house—it's a normal part of housetraining. 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, like make a startling noise (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.
- Don't 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 spot and scolding him, or any other punishment will only make him afraid of you or afraid to eliminate in your presence. In fact, punishment will often do more harm than good.
- 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'll get confused about where he's supposed to eliminate, which will prolong the housetraining process.

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 for you to get a puppy; instead, you may want to consider an older dog, who can wait for your return.

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

Related topics at www.petsforlife.org

- [Crate Training Your Dog](#)

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Or you'll need 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 newspaper may create a lifelong surface preference, meaning that even as an adult he may eliminate on any newspaper lying around the living room.

When your puppy must be left alone for long periods of time, confine him to an area with enough room for a sleeping space, a playing space, and a separate place to eliminate. In the area designated as the elimination area, use either newspapers or a sod box. To make a sod box, place sod in a container such as a child's small plastic swimming pool. You can also find dog litter products at a pet supply store. If you clean up an accident in the house, put the soiled rags or paper towels in the designated elimination area. The smell will help your puppy recognize the area as the place where he is supposed to eliminate.

Other Types of House Soiling Problems

If you've consistently followed the housetraining procedures and your puppy continues to eliminate in the house, there may be another reason for his behavior.

- **Medical Problems:** House soiling can often be caused by physical problems such as a urinary tract infection or a parasite infection. Check with your veterinarian to rule out any possibility of disease or illness.
- **Submissive/Excitement Urination:** Some dogs, especially young ones, temporarily lose control of their bladders when they become excited or feel threatened. This usually occurs during greetings or periods of intense play or when they're about to be punished.
- **Territorial Urine-Marking:** Dogs sometimes deposit small amounts of urine or feces to scent-mark their territory. Both male and female dogs do this, and it most often occurs when they believe their territory has been invaded.
- **Separation Anxiety:** Dogs who become anxious when they're left alone may house soil as a result. Usually, there are other symptoms as well, such as destructive behavior or vocalization.
- **Fears or Phobias:** When animals become frightened, they may lose control of their bladder or bowels. If your puppy is afraid of loud noises such as thunderstorms or fireworks, he may house soil when he's exposed to these sounds.

Adapted from material originally developed by applied animal behaviorists at the Dumb Friends League, Denver, Colorado.
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CANINE HOUSETRAINING

A. Choose the desired location and teach the puppy where to go

1. Ensure that the location is practical and easy to access (e.g., a short walk from the back door).
2. Go out with your puppy every time and enthusiastically praise elimination in the desired area.
3. Take the pet out when it is most likely to need to eliminate:
 - Following play, exercise, meals, naps, and being released from confinement. Feeding and drinking may stimulate elimination. Therefore, supervise well after feeding and plan to take the puppy out to eliminate within 30 to 60 minutes after it eats.
 - Prior to confinement or bedtime.
4. Consider teaching your puppy to 'go' on command by saying a command word, such as 'hurry up,' in a positive tone as it squats to eliminate.

B. Maintain a consistent schedule

1. Offer food two to three times each day at the same time.
2. Only leave the food down for 20 minutes or until your puppy walks away. However, you should also discuss with your veterinarian how to assess your puppy's body score (i.e., whether it is too heavy, skinny, or normal) so that food quantity can be adjusted according to your pet's needs.
3. Take up the water bowl about one to two hours prior to bedtime.

C. Confine/supervise (small room, crate, or tie-down)

1. Until the puppy has completed four consecutive weeks without soiling in the home, it should be within eyesight of a family member or confined to a safe puppy-proofed area.
2. The room, crate, or pen used for confinement is intended to serve as a safe, comfortable bed, playpen, or den for the puppy. The puppy should not be confined to this area until after it has eliminated and had sufficient exercise and social interaction (i.e., when it is due for a sleep, nap, or rest) and should not be confined for any longer than it can control elimination, unless paper-training techniques are being used.
3. Most puppies can control elimination through the night by four months of age. During the daytime, puppies four months or less usually have a few hours of control, while puppies five months and over may be able to last longer between eliminations.
4. If the puppy eliminates in its cage, it may have been left there longer than it can be confined without eliminating, or the cage may be large enough that it sleeps in one end and eliminates in the other; in this case a divider might be used temporarily. Also, if the puppy is anxious about being confined to its crate or left alone, it is unlikely to keep the crate clean.
5. Use a leash indoors to help supervise the puppy. By observing the puppy closely for pre-elimination signs, the puppy can be trained to eliminate outdoors without the need for punishment and may soon learn to signal when it has to eliminate.

D. Handling mistakes

1. Punishment is generally not indicated as part of a housetraining program. The goal is to interrupt your puppy if it is caught in the act of eliminating indoors, and direct it to the appropriate location so that it can be rewarded when it eliminates there.
2. If you catch your puppy in the act of eliminating indoors, quickly say 'no' and clap your hands or pull on the leash to interrupt the behavior (you have one to two seconds to catch it in the act). Then take the pet outside and praise it enthusiastically upon completion.
3. If urine or stool is found on the floor after the puppy has eliminated, do not consider any form of correction since the puppy will not associate the correction with the elimination. You can prevent resoiling in the home by closing doors or moving furniture to prevent access to the location, booby trapping the location with a repellent or motion detector, constant supervision of your puppy, and by consistently rewarding elimination outdoors.

E. Odor elimination

Clean up any odors from indoor elimination. Be certain to use enough odor neutralizer to get to the source of the odor. Use one of the products that have been specifically designed to eliminate pet urine odors (chemical modification, enzymes, bacterial odor removal), and follow the label directions.

F. Paper training

While it is best to skip paper training and immediately train the pup to eliminate outdoors, this approach is sometimes necessary for apartment dwellers or when it is not practical to take the puppy outside frequently enough. For paper training, the puppy should be confined to a room or pen with paper covering the floor except for a sleeping area. The puppy should be confined to this area while you are out, or when you cannot supervise. Paper training can be combined with outdoor training so that the puppy learns that there are two appropriate places to eliminate. The crate could be used for confinement for shorter departures and the papered area for longer departures. Another option is to train the pup to use an indoor litter product.

In some households and in some communities, it might also be practical to house the dog in an outdoor run, or provide a dog door with outdoor access if the owner cannot be home to let the dog outside when it needs to eliminate.

HOUS TRAINING ATA GLANCE

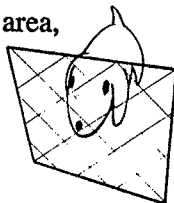
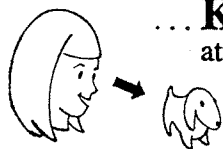
Use this quick reference housetraining guide to help your puppy use natural instincts for gentle, quick, and effective housetraining.

To prevent undesirable elimination:

Do not let your puppy wander all over the house without supervision

Keep your puppy confined in a small area, like a kennel or den, or ...

... **Keep** your puppy in view, or attached to you by a leash



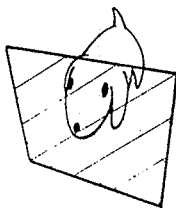
When your puppy sniffs and circle around, take puppy to desired elimination area



Feed your puppy a measured amount of food. When puppy walks away or after about 10-15 minutes, pick up the bowl. Then follow steps 1-5 below.

Puppies instinctively desire to eliminate after these activities:

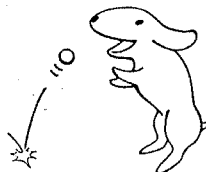
After being confined



After eating or drinking



After playing



After resting or sleeping



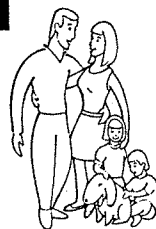
5 to 30 minutes after any of these activities, follow steps 1-5 to help your puppy eliminate in the chosen area.

1. Take puppy to the selected place for elimination
2. Say special words that you want your puppy to associate with desirable elimination
3. When puppy begins to eliminate, say quiet words of praise
4. When puppy is done, praise enthusiastically, pet, and reward with food
5. Reward each time with praise, but as your puppy learns, give food rewards intermittently



PREVENTION IS THE KEY TO SUCCESS,

but if someone fails to prevent your puppy from having a soiling accident. . .



... **Don't** scold your puppy

Quietly clean up the mess

Deodorize the soiled area

IT IS A FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY TO PREVENT FUTURE SOILING ACCIDENTS