

Puppy House Training

House training boils down to 2 key ingredients: **preventing accidents** and **rewarding successes**. To do this successfully, your puppy must always be in 1 of 3 locations:

- Outside with you
- Inside with your constant supervision
- Or when you can't supervise, confined in a crate or a small, puppy-proofed room.

House Training Made Easy

- Regular meals, regular outings

Keep your puppy on a consistent feeding schedule, and take up food between meals. Predictable meals lead to predictable elimination, which helps you house train. Take your puppy outside to potty after every meal as well as first thing in the morning, last thing at night, after every nap, and after intense play or chewing. How many additional times between these depends on your puppy's age and individual ability. Very young puppies (8–10 weeks of age) need to go out at least every hour.

- Reward successes

Don't send your puppy outside alone. Go with him! That way you'll know whether he's gone, and you'll be there to tell him he did good! Reward him with happy praise and a tasty treat *as soon as he finishes, right on the spot*. If you wait until he runs to you, he'll think he was rewarded for coming to you, not for pottying. Praise and reward all outdoor elimination for the first month of house training.

- Prevent accidents

Supervise, supervise, supervise! When you can't constantly watch your puppy, put him in his crate with a chew toy. Use a larger area — like a small, pet-gated, puppy-proofed room — for times that are longer than your puppy can hold it in the crate. (See Puppy Crate Training for guidelines.) A kitchen is ideal because it's not too large, it's central so your puppy won't feel isolated, and it has an easy-to-clean floor. Lay down potty pads or newspaper at one end, and bed, food, water and toys at the other end.

What to Do About Accidents

- Accidents happen! No one is perfect — not you or your puppy! If your puppy makes a mistake while unsupervised, tighten up your house training regimen. Remember that your puppy must be in 1 of 3 locations at all times (see page 1). And by all means, do NOTHING to your puppy. Your puppy cannot connect late punishment with a behavior (emptying her bladder or bowels) that she did even 10 seconds ago.



- If you catch your puppy *just starting* an accident, clap sharply twice or say “Uh-uh!” just loud enough to interrupt her, but not scare her. Then show her where to go by hustling her outside. Wait until she finishes there, then praise her happily and give her a treat.
- Clean all accidents thoroughly with an enzymatic cleaner, like Nature’s Miracle or Out!, so your puppy isn’t drawn back to the same spot again by lingering scent.
- Illness, changes in your family or schedule, a change of food, weather changes, or being in other people’s homes can all cause lapses in house training. Confine, supervise and help her be good!

Additional Guidelines

- Remember that weak puppy muscles, small bladders and frequent meals (3–4 times a day) all add up to more frequent elimination.
- Always watch for early signs that your pup needs to potty. Common signs are pacing, whining, circling, sniffing, approaching and staring at you, or leaving the room. The moment you see any of these, run your puppy outside!
- If your puppy doesn’t potty on any particular outing, realize that she’s nearly full and be sure to crate her with a chew toy to prevent any accident back inside. Try again in 15 to 30 minutes.
- Starting at age 3 months, gradually extend the time between outings by about a half hour every week or two.
- After 2 or 3 weeks with no accidents, add one extra room of freedom and supervise closely. If your puppy’s successful, add more room in the house every 2 or 3 weeks.
- Most puppies can be reasonably house trained by 4 to 6 months of age. Some take until 8 to 12 months of age. Many will learn but then regress. This is all normal!
- During the day, it’s reasonable to expect an adult dog to hold it for 4 or 5 hours maximum. Some can hold it longer, but not without considerable effort and stress. Give your dog a break!

What NOT to Do

- Don’t leave your puppy in the crate too long and force her to soil in it. Doing so can ruin your puppy’s instinct to keep sleeping areas clean, which will make house training much harder.
- Never rub your puppy’s nose in her waste! And don’t scold or physically punish her for accidents. Punishment will only teach her to avoid you when she feels the need, rather than come find you. It’s why some puppies start to soil behind their owners’ backs, in other rooms, behind furniture, or when their owners aren’t home.