



Step by Step Guide to Potty Training

WHY IS POTTY TRAINING IMPORTANT?

Whether you're working with a puppy or an adult dog, potty training is an essential component of your dog's training journey. Potty training strengthens the bond between you and your dog, and helps build confidence through positive reinforcement, setting a foundation for a future of successful training.

THE STEPS

Step 1: Establish the "I need to go" cue you want from your dog.

- Barking
- Going to the door
- Physically pawing/nosing you
- Spinning in a circle
- Hitting a doorbell
 - » There are many different types of bells, all work pretty much the same way.
 - » Just put them up as you would if your dog was fully trained to it.
 - » Try putting a little peanut butter or whipped cream on the bell to create interest in it.
- Any other cue you may prefer

Step 2: Put the meaning to that cue.

- When they do the thing you want, say "let's go potty" and walk towards the door.
- Have your leash and a treat ready at the door for a quick transition outside.

Step 3: Go directly to the spot you'd like to be the potty place and be consistent.

- » This is wonderful for easy cleaning up and clear expectations.
- » Leashes prevent them from getting too distracted or sitting by the door (especially when raining) and forgetting to go.

Step 4: When they eliminate, say "good potty, pee, or poo!" Any word will do and give them a treat right away!

- Quick marking of good behavior is crucial for learning.
- Vary your rewards! Verbal, physical, and food praise are all great!

Step 5: Reward with play time!

- If they went, take off the leash and allow for the fun to begin. Freedom/Play are always great motivators for dogs!

Step 6: Stay consistent. When your dog is giving clear outside signals and no longer having accidents, you can fade out the leash and be proud of their new skill! Often, while on walks or in a hurry, you can say "go potty" and your dog will go on command when they have fully learned the meaning.

ADDITIONAL TIPS

Don't harshly punish a dog if they go inside. This is especially important with little dogs who may find sneakier hiding places to go.

Don't train with potty pads. Potty pads can be very convenient to start, though they still give clear permission that it is ok to go inside, making it much harder to work on fully potty training later.

Let them out right after waking up, eating, and playing. When a dog moves their body, they begin to stimulate the bladder and bowels. This is also true when eating and drinking more food.

Limit your dog's access to space.

Puppies and new dogs should be limited to space in the house.

Block hallways, close doors to rooms, baby gates, etc.

Dogs do not want to soil their living space. They need to learn that the entire house is their living space through slow acclimation to more freedom of the environment.

Take them outside very often while training. While potty training, they shouldn't go longer than about every 1-2 hours before trying again. This is especially important for puppies.

QUESTIONS?

Contact the HSSW Dog Training Team at dogtraining@southwesthumane.org or visit hssw.org/training.