

Puppy Housetraining

➤ Establish a consistent schedule

Dogs are routine oriented and will adjust their behaviors, including elimination, to a set schedule. This includes having a consistent schedule for bedtime, wake up time, meal time, nap time, play time, and potty time. A "team" meeting of everyone who will care for the puppy may be needed to plan the schedule. Potty time is needed:

1. upon waking (The need is urgent! To avoid accidents, carry the puppy from bed directly to the grass)
2. after eating
3. after running or playing hard for 10-15 minutes (physical exertion may stimulate elimination)
4. before and after naps
5. before bedtime, and possibly once or twice through the night until they are 3-6 months old
6. Additional times as needed. Puppies are individuals, but a general guide is once per hour for every month of age - every 2 hours at 2 months, 3 hours at 3 months, etc. From 5 months into adulthood dogs need to go out at least 3-4 times during the day and should not be expected to hold it more than 6 hours at a time.

If work or other activities prevent following this schedule, consider enrolling your puppy in Doggie Daycare, asking a friend to help, or hiring a dog walker. As a last resort, puppies can be confined in a room or playpen with newspapers on the floor. Never confine on a surface you do not want them to use for elimination in the future, like carpet, tile, bedding, etc. Use a temporary substance like newspaper to cover the floor until the puppy can hold it between trips out. If you have a schedule which will always require an interval greater than 6 hours, consider a doggie door with indoor/outdoor kennel or long term use of Doggie Daycare or a Pet Walker.

➤ Use confinement to keep your puppy safe and prevent accidents

Your puppy should be confined when you cannot provide complete supervision. A sturdy wire mesh or molded plastic (pet taxi) crate is the ideal place for confinement. When shopping for a crate it is fine to buy one for the adult size of your dog, but place a divider or box inside the crate to block part of it off so the puppy has just enough room to stand, turn around, and lay down comfortably. Too much room will encourage the pup to eliminate in one area and sleep in another.

A crate prevents many behavior problems (chewing, digging, garbage raiding, etc) and serves as a home or “den” for your dog. A crate is a safe, secure, and humane place to confine your puppy when he cannot be directly supervised, but beware of overusing the crate. ***The puppy should never be confined in a crate longer than he/she can hold their bladder*** (see alternative confinement methods above for those who cannot let the puppy out on a frequent enough schedule). Crate time needs to be broken up with plenty of interactive, supervised time outside the crate for exercise, exploration of the environment, and lots of handling and bonding time with your family.

To introduce your puppy to his crate, choose a time when the puppy has recently eliminated and put him in the crate with a treat or favorite chew toy. Practice putting him in and out and giving a treat and praise for going into the crate. When he is comfortable, close the door and let him nap or play with his toy. It is normal for the puppy to whine, cry, or bark the first few times he is confined. He is responding to being left alone (separated from his pack), but he needs to learn to spend time alone since he cannot be with you 24 hours a day. Avoid letting the puppy out when crying or barking or he will learn that it gets him released and he will never learn to settle down and spend time alone. Once the

puppy has settled down or napped for a while, let him out quietly (don't make a big fuss over him or he will be more anxious to get out in the future), and take him out to eliminate and have play time.

Some puppies will settle down and sleep happily in their crate at night if you place it right beside your bed. This also allows you to hear them if they wake up and need to go outside. When possible, take your puppy's crate with you if you travel with him. He will appreciate the comfort of his own bed in the new surroundings.

➤ **Supervise and reinforce proper elimination habits**

When the puppy is not safely confined, provide close supervision so you can correct or celebrate eliminations. You want to catch the puppy in the act every time he eliminates so you can either correct indoors or celebrate outdoors.

YOU SHOULD NEVER CORRECT YOUR PUPPY FOR ELIMINATING IN THE HOUSE IF YOU DID NOT CATCH HIM "IN THE ACT," AND YOU SHOULD NOT USE PHYSICAL PUNISHMENTS LIKE SPANKING OR RUBBING HIS NOSE IN THE MESS. The puppy will only be confused and frightened by physical punishment. A puppy who acts upset when you find a housetraining accident is not "feeling guilty" because the puppy "knows it's wrong." The body language often misinterpreted as "guilt" is actually submission or even fear because the puppy knows you are upset. The puppy is not learning anything from the punishment and may develop undesirable behaviors like fear biting as a result.

Proper correction is given only in the act (actually squatting to eliminate) and should not consist of more than a stern "NO!" to interrupt the elimination so you can take him outside. If the puppy tries to sneak off by himself while indoors, it may help to shut off certain areas of the house or use a leash to tether the puppy near you to supervise him.

It is equally important to go outside with the puppy during times you know he needs to go, such as after napping or eating, and giving lots of praise and a treat as soon as he eliminates outside. By following such a routine, the puppy gets positive feedback every time he eliminates outdoors, and negative feedback each time he eliminates indoors. If you will dedicate several weeks to diligently supervising, your reward will be a dog that is house trained for life.

➤ **Clean accidents thoroughly with a pet urine odor eliminator and towels or a wet/dry vac.**

If the odor is not eliminated completely, the puppy may return to that location to eliminate again.

➤ **Be patient. Puppies will not usually be completely housetrained until 4-6 months old.**