

House Training

For Puppies and Older Dogs



Dogs are inherently clean animals. As tiny infants, their mothers keep them very clean. As soon as they can, puppies prefer to walk away from their eating, sleeping, and play areas to eliminate.

If housetraining takes a long time or if a puppy or an older dog suddenly starts eliminating in the house after they have been able not to, please see your veterinarian. There could be a medical issue going on.

THE BASIC PRINCIPLES

Housetraining is all about habit. Your dog needs to develop the habit of only eliminating outdoors. You do not need to teach your dog that he "did wrong" when he has an accident and trying to do so will only cause problems. Indeed, you could make it worse by correcting him.

Just give your dog lots of opportunities to eliminate outdoors and use a crate, expen or personal tether (hands-free leash) to minimize his opportunities to eliminate indoors. If you are consistent over a long period of time, your dog should develop the habit of only eliminating outdoors.



WHEN THERE ARE ACCIDENTS

Do not punish your dog for accidents, as it only teaches your dog to not eliminate where you can see him doing it. Just take a deep breath and clean up. Soak up all of the urine and pick/wipe up all the poop. Blot well. Then apply an enzymatic odour digester. Do not use any cleaning agent that contains ammonia.

SUPERVISE

In the house, it is easier to watch your dog in a small area, perhaps one or two rooms. Close the doors or use baby gates to block him from other rooms. Be aware, however, that areas that your dog never has access to may be areas that he may consider ok for elimination ("I don't live, eat or sleep here, so it's ok").

CRATE or EX-PEN

A pup that will be left home a lot could be kept in an exercise pen. This enclosure is roomy enough to allow space on one side for his bed and toys and a place on the other side for a toilet.

Correct use of a crate is critical to housetraining an adult dog. Most dogs will not eliminate while they are in a properly sized crate. As a result, you can use your crate to control when your dog has the opportunity to eliminate.

Your dog's crate should be large enough that he can stand up in it and turn around and lie down comfortably, but no larger. It is very important that you never leave your dog in his crate longer than he is capable of "holding it", so that he does not develop a habit of eliminating in his crate, or housetraining will be far more difficult. Make sure you always give him something to do in his crate, like a yummy chew. Feed his meals in his crate, leaving the door open. Hide yummy surprises in your dog's crate so that he learns that he should check it from time to time. Teach your dog to LOVE his crate! As an alternative to the crate, you could place your dog on leash and tie the leash to your belt, or ask us about using a hands-free leash.

KEEP RECORDS

The younger the dog, the more often he needs to eliminate. Dogs usually defecate shortly after eating. Puppies urinate more frequently. Very young puppies might need to urinate as often as every hour or so, especially during active periods. The puppy should be taken to the toilet:

- first thing in the morning, and last thing at night,
- after a play period (or other stimulating activity),
- after naps, and

- any other change in activities.

To avoid problems when housetraining an older dog, you need to keep records. **Do not skip this step!**

Record the time of your dog's eliminations, the type (piddle/poop), and where it happens. Also record other activities, inc eating, playing, sleeping, and walks. This record will let you know how long your dog can "hold it." The time may vary depending on the time of day or depending on whether the day is a workday or not.

A TRAINING PROGRAMME

Only empty dogs get to be out of their crates/off leash in the house. Review your notes and estimate how frequently your dog needs to eliminate. If you are not certain, start at two hours. Then divide that time in half. The first half of the time, your dog is "empty." This is his "empty period." The second half of this time, he or she is either "filling up" or "full." This is his "filling up period."

Your dog gets to be out of his crate when he is empty. He needs to be in his crate when he is filling up.

Suppose you know your dog normally needs to pee every two hours during the day. That would mean that after your dog pees, he or she gets 60 minutes out of his crate/off leash. At the 60-minute mark, you either take him outside to his potty spot, or you put him in his crate. Then take him out again within the next 60 minutes. Once he pees, the clock resets. The dog's empty period begins the minute he eliminates, even if you take him on a walk after he piddles. If you take him on a walk that lasts the entire empty period and he doesn't piddle during the walk, his empty period is over and he is now "filling up". This means that you need to put him in his crate/on leash when you get home. If he does pee during the walk, restart the clock.

HOW TO ENCOURAGE ELIMINATION OUTSIDE

Pick a potty spot. The spot should be somewhere relatively near your door and somewhere your dog will be comfortable eliminating. When you think your dog needs to potty, take her to her potty spot. Now, wait. Stand at the potty spot and give your dog the full length of the leash to find a precise spot. Stand still, be silent, and wait for up to 10 minutes. If she eliminates, great! Throw a party, give her treats, take her on a walk, play with her! All the fun stuff happens AFTER elimination! If your dog does not eliminate, take her inside without going on a walk, and put her back in the crate/on leash. Make sure you give your dog something good to chew on while she is in her crate (Remember, you want her to love her crate!). Wait 20 minutes and then take her back out to her potty spot. Repeat this process until she finally eliminates. THEN, you go for a walk, and play! Do not punish elimination outside by immediately going inside again to be boring. When you eventually go home after your dog has eliminated and had some fun outside, let your dog remain out of the crate while she is empty. When she hits the filling up period, either take her out to pee again or put her in her crate for the remainder of the filling up period.

HELP ME MAKE IT THROUGH THE NIGHT

When a baby pup first comes home to live with you, set your alarm clock several hours earlier than normal so you can escort your pup to the toilet. Slowly advance the alarm to your normal wake-up time.

By 12 weeks of age, most pups should be able to make it through a seven-hour night, if managed properly. Withholding food and water late in the evening will lessen the chances of a puppy needing to go out during the night. He shouldn't need water during the night.

STICK WITH IT!

Beware of letting initial successes make you overconfident! If your dog goes a few days or a full week with no accidents, DO NOT let the training programme slide! This is when accidents happen, and then you'll get very frustrated and you may worry that your dog will never be housetrained. You will be right to be worried. If you do not stick with the programme, it will take far longer for your dog to be housetrained, if at all. Avoid this cycle!

Stick with the programme until your dog has gone at least several months without any accidents. Eventually, you will probably not need to use the crate at all, but don't go cold turkey! Relax the programme gradually. Try crating your dog for the final ¼ of the total time he is able to hold it. If he is accident-free for a few more months, then try minimizing the use of the crate while you are home, but you must learn to respond to his signals to go out to potty. They may be very subtle. If you have a setback, you will need to start over.

You CAN house train your dog, just keep at it! ■