

Potty Training Your Puppy

When house training a new puppy, it can be difficult to know where to start. This handout has you covered! Learn everything from which solutions to use and avoid to how large your puppy's area should be to how often they need to go out.

Outside, right from the start

- Right from the first day, start taking your puppy outdoors to eliminate.
- It's best to avoid indoor potty solutions, such as potty pads and grass patches, or to wean away from these as soon as possible, as they only blur the bathroom a hard-to-break habit of going potty indoors.

Puppy potty party

- Use gentle, upbeat praise (be careful not to accidentally startle), followed by a tasty treat to reward the puppy EVERY time they go potty outdoors.
- Then further the fun by doing something enjoyable immediately after, like offering off-leash exploration in a fenced space, extending the walk, engaging in play, or, if going back inside, offering supervised freedom in a slightly larger area indoors.

Confinement is key

- Dogs have an instinctual preference to eliminate away from their nest and to keep their primary dwelling spaces dry and free from eliminations.
- The #1 house training mistake is giving the pup too much space too fast before he or she is fully settled in.
- If pups are given too much space to roam unsupervised, they may simply pick a corner or area far away from their bed as fair game for a potty area.
- Instead of opening up the home all at once, start small and expand the area gradually over time as they learn that eliminating outdoors pays off for them.



Optional: Put the poo on cue

- 🐾 Teach the pup to go more promptly by adding a cue to the behavior. Initially say the cue, such as right as the dog eliminates, such as when they're in a squat or lifting a leg.
 - 🐾 Then, after a few pairings, start to say the word just before the pup is about to go, such as when they're spinning in a circle, sniffing intensely, just tucking their or saddling up beside a vertical surface.
- Once the word has been paired with the action enough times, it can be used to request the behavior.
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Start small

- During sleeping hours when the pup is taken out less frequently, offer a smaller sleeping space, such as a crate, that's just large enough to allow the pup to easily stand up, turn around, and lie down.
- During waking hours when the pup wants to move around more and is taken out to potty more frequently, a day play area may be a slightly larger gated, fenced, or play-pen area. This should initially be located on a nonabsorbent surface, such as linoleum or tile, and kept free from soft surfaces like carpet, blankets, and rugs, except for the puppy's bed.
- Alternative supervised confinement can include keeping the pup tethered with a harness and leash to their person or to a sturdy, stationary object, like a couch leg.

Structured bathroom breaks

- Pups need to be taken outside to eliminate immediately every time they wake from sleeping. Do not delay!
- As soon as they wake up, carry the pup or place him or her on a four- to six-foot leash and go swiftly from indoors to their outdoor potty area.
- Once there, calmly walk with your pup on a leash around the elimination area. Remain neutral to divert the pup's attention away from interacting with you until he has eliminated.
- Limit the elimination outing to five minutes. If the puppy fails to eliminate, calmly head back indoors and take the pup back out 15 minutes later to try again.

How long pups can hold it

- The longest length of time a puppy can reasonably hold it between eliminations is one hour for every month of age, plus one.
- For example, a two-month-old puppy can hold it up to three hours. Or a three-month-old pup can wait up to four hours.
- This general guideline offers an upper limit for sleeping/resting hours.
- Exercise and activity elicits more frequent eliminations and requires the puppy be taken out more often, such as after waking from a nap, playing, eating, or drinking.

Accidents happen

- If an accident occurs, remain calm and place the puppy in another area so they're not in the middle of the mess as it's cleaned.
- Use a cleaning product that sanitizes and removes not only stains, but also any residual odors, rather than merely masking the scent.
- Unless odor molecules from previous accidents are completely broken down and removed, these scents will prompt more eliminations in this area in the future.



NEVER punish

- 🐾 Do not punish your puppy for eliminating indoors. Punishment doesn't teach the puppy what to do and is likely to cause the puppy to perceive you as a possible danger.
- 🐾 Using punishment just makes it more likely the pup will choose to eliminate in remote locations next time, because you've shown him or her it's unsafe to eliminate around you.
- 🐾 If you do catch the puppy indoors, such as just starting to squat to pee or poo, use an attention getter, like gentle hand clapping or kissy noises to get the pup's immediate attention without scaring him. Immediately pick up the pup or clip on the leash and redirect the pup outdoors instead where you can reward him afterwards.