



Training Your New Puppy



House Training

Housetraining your puppy requires far more than a few stacks of old newspapers--it calls for vigilance, patience, plenty of commitment, and, above all, consistency. By following the procedures outlined below, you can minimize house-soiling incidents. Virtually every dog, especially puppies, will have an accident in the house, and more likely, several. Expect this--it is part of living with a puppy. The more consistent you are in following the basic housetraining procedures, the faster your puppy will learn acceptable behavior. It may take several weeks to housetrain your puppy, and with some of the smaller breeds, it might take longer.

○ ESTABLISH A ROUTINE

Like babies, puppies do best on a regular schedule. The schedule teaches him that there are times to eat, times to play, and times to potty.

Generally speaking, a puppy can control his bladder one hour for every month of age. So if your puppy is two months old, he can hold it for about two hours. Don't go longer than this between bathroom breaks or he's guaranteed to have an accident. If you work outside the home, this means you may need help give your puppy his breaks. Consider hiring a dog walker.

○ REWARD YOUR PUPPY

Praise your puppy or give him a treat every time he eliminates outdoors. Remember to do so immediately after he's finished eliminating, not after he comes back inside the house. This step is vital because rewarding your dog for eliminating outdoors is the only way he'll know what's expected of him. Before rewarding him, be sure he's finished eliminating. Puppies are easily distracted; if you praise him too soon, he may forget to finish until he's back in the house.

○ GO OUTSIDE FREQUENTLY

Take your puppy outside frequently (at least every two hours) and immediately after he wakes up, during and after playing, and after eating or drinking.

○ USE A FEEDING SCHEDULE

Put your puppy on a regular feeding schedule. "What goes into a puppy on a schedule comes out of a puppy on a schedule." Depending on their age, puppies usually need to be fed three or four times a day. Feeding your puppy at the same time each day will make it more likely that he'll eliminate at consistent times as well, and that makes housetraining easier for both of you.

○ PICK A DESIGNATED SPOT

Pick a bathroom spot outside, and always take your puppy to that spot using a leash. While your puppy is eliminating, use a word or phrase like "go potty," that you can eventually use before he eliminates to remind him what to do. Take him out for a longer walk or some playtime only after he has eliminated.

○ SUPERVISE

Don't give your puppy an opportunity to soil in the house; keep an eye on him whenever he is indoors.

○ GET SOME SLEEP!

Pick up your puppy's water dish about 2.5 hours before bedtime to reduce the likelihood that he'll need to potty during the night. Most puppies can sleep for approximately 7 hours without having to eliminate. If your puppy does wake you up in the night, don't make a big deal of it; otherwise, he will think it is time to play and won't go back to sleep. Turn on as few lights as possible, don't talk to or play with your puppy, take him out to do his business, and return him to his bed.

○ PRACTICE CONFINEMENT

When you're unable to watch your puppy at all times, he should be confined to an area small enough that he won't want to eliminate there. The space should be just big enough for him to comfortably stand, lie down, and turn around in. You can use a portion of a bathroom or laundry room blocked off with baby gates.

Better yet, you may want to crate train your puppy and use the crate to confine him. (Be sure to learn how to use a crate humanely as a method of confinement.)

If your puppy has spent several hours in confinement, you'll need to take him directly to his bathroom spot as soon as you let him out, and offer praise when he eliminates.

○ KEEP A LEASH ON IN THE YARD

Keep your puppy on a leash in the yard. During the housetraining process, your yard should be treated like any other room in your house. Give your puppy some freedom in the house and yard only after he is reliably housetrained. This will help to guide your puppy to the spot where he is supposed to eliminate.

○ LEARN THE SIGNS

Tether your puppy to you or a nearby piece of furniture with a six-foot leash if you are not actively training or playing with him. Watch for signs your puppy needs to eliminate. Some signs are obvious, such as barking or scratching at the door, squatting, restlessness, sniffing around, or circling. When you see these signs, immediately grab the leash and take him outside to his bathroom spot. If he eliminates, praise him lavishly and reward with a treat.



Oops!

Expect your puppy to have a few accidents in the house, it's a normal part of housetraining. Here's what to do when that happens:

- Interrupt your puppy when you catch him in the act of eliminating in the house.
- Make a startling noise (be careful not to scare him) or say "OUTSIDE!" Immediately take him to the designated bathroom spot, give praise, and offer a treat after he finishes eliminating there.
- If you find a soiled area, it's too late to administer a correction. Just clean it up. Rubbing your puppy's nose in it, taking him to the spot and scolding him, or any other punishment will only make him afraid of you or afraid to eliminate in your presence. In fact, punishment will often do more harm than good.
- Clean the soiled area thoroughly. Puppies are highly motivated to continue soiling in areas that smell like urine or feces. Check with your veterinarian or pet store for products designed specifically to clean areas soiled by pets.
- For fastest house training, it's extremely important that you use the supervision and confinement procedures outlined above to minimize the number of accidents. If you allow your puppy to eliminate frequently in the house, he will get confused about where he's supposed to eliminate, which will prolong the housetraining process.



When You're Away...

A puppy under six months of age cannot be expected to control his bladder for more than a few hours at a time (approximately one hour for each month of age). If you have to be away from the home more than 4-5 hours a day, this may not be the best time for you to get a puppy; instead, you may want to consider an older dog, who can wait for your return.

If you already have a puppy and must be away for long periods of time, you'll need to:

- Arrange for someone, such as a responsible neighbor or a professional pet sitter, to take him outside to eliminate
- Train your puppy to eliminate in a specific place indoors. Be aware, however, that doing so can prolong the process of housetraining. Teaching your puppy to eliminate on newspaper may create a life-long surface preference, meaning that even as an adult your dog may eliminate on any newspaper lying about. For this reason, using puppy pads is preferable, although this may not prevent the behavior.



Puppy Pad Training



When your puppy must be left alone for long periods of time, confine him to an area with enough room for a sleeping space, a playing space, and a separate place to eliminate.

In the designated elimination area, use either puppy pads or a sod box. To make a sod box, place sod in a container such as a child's small, plastic swimming pool. You can also find dog litter products at the pet supply store.

If you clean up an accident in the house, put the soiled rags or paper towels in the designated elimination area. The smell will help your puppy recognize the area as a place where he is supposed to eliminate.



Crate Training

Private room with a view. Ideal for traveling dogs or for those who just want a secure, quiet place to hang out at home.

That's how your dog might describe his crate. It's his personal den where he can find comfort and solitude while you know he's safe and secure--and not shredding your house

○ CRATING PHILOSOPHY

Crate training uses a dog's natural instincts as a den animal. A wild dog's den is his home, a place to sleep, hide from danger, and raise a family. The crate becomes your dog's den, an ideal spot to snooze or take refuge during a thunderstorm.

- The primary use for a crate is housetraining. Dogs don't like to soil their dens.
- The crate can limit access to the rest of the house while he learns other rules, like not to chew on furniture.
- Crates are a safe way to transport your dog in a car, giving them a familiar space.
- The crate helps to teach independence, and reduce separation anxiety.

○ CRATING CAUTION!

A crate isn't a magical solution; if not used correctly, a dog can feel trapped and frustrated.

- Don't leave your dog in the crate too long. A dog that's crated day and night doesn't get enough exercise or human interaction and can become depressed or anxious. You may have to change your schedule, hire a pet sitter, or take your dog to a doggie daycare facility to reduce the amount of time he must spend in his crate every day.
- Puppies under six months of age should not stay in a crate for more than three or four hours at a time. They cannot control their bladders and bowels for that long. The same goes for adult dogs that are being housetrained. Physically, they can hold it, but they do not know they're supposed to.
- Crate your dog only until you can trust him not to destroy the house. After that, it should be a place he goes voluntarily.

○ SELECTING A CRATE

Several types of crates are available and can be purchased at most pet supply stores or online.

- Plastic (often called "flight/travel kennels")
- Fabric on a collapsible, rigid frame
- Collapsible, metal pens

Your dog's crate should be just large enough for him to stand up and turn around in. If your dog is still growing, choose a crate size that will accommodate his adult size. So your dog can't eliminate at one end and retreat to the other, lock off the excess crate space.



Crate Training Process

Crate training can take days or weeks, depending on your dog's age, temperament and past experiences.

It is important to keep two things in mind while crate training:

- The crate should always be associated with something pleasant.
- Training should take place in a series of small steps. Don't go too fast!



○ STEP 1: INTRODUCE YOUR DOG TO THE CRATE

Place the crate in the area of your house where the family spends a lot of time, such as the family room. Put a soft blanket or towel in the crate. Take the door off and let the dog explore the crate at his leisure. Some dogs will be naturally curious and start sleeping in the crate right away. If your dog isn't one of them:

Bring him over to the crate, and talk to him in a happy tone of voice. Make sure the crate door is open and secured so that it won't hit him and frighten him.

Encourage your dog to enter the crate by dropping some small food treats nearby, then just inside the door, and finally, all the way inside the crate. If he refuses to go all the way in at first, that's okay; don't force him to enter.

Continue tossing treats into the crate until your dog will walk calmly all the way into the crate to get the food. If he isn't interested in treats, try tossing a favorite toy in the crate. This step may take a few minutes or as long as several days.

○ STEP 2: FEED YOUR PUPPY IN THE CRATE

After introducing your puppy to the crate, begin feeding him his regular meals near the crate. This will create a pleasant association with the crate.

If your puppy is readily entering the crate when you begin Step 2, place the food dish all the way at the back of the crate.

If he remains reluctant to enter the crate, push the dish only as far inside as he will readily go without becoming fearful or anxious. Each time you feed him, place the dish a little farther back in the crate.

Once your dog is standing comfortably in the crate to eat his meal, you can close the door while he's eating. When you first do this, open the door as soon as he finishes his meal. With each successive feeding, leave the door closed a few minutes longer, until he's staying in the crate for ten minutes or so after eating.

If he begins to whine to be let out, you may have increased the length of time too quickly. Next time, try leaving him in the crate for a shorter time period. If he does whine or cry in the crate, don't let him out until he stops. Otherwise, he'll learn that the way to get out of the crate is to whine, so he'll keep doing it.



○ STEP 3: LENGTHEN THE CRATING PERIODS

After your puppy is eating his regular meals in the crate with no sign of fear or anxiety, you can confine him there for short periods while you're home.

- Call him over to the crate and give him a treat.
- Give him a command to enter, such as "kennel." Encourage him by pointing to the inside of the crate with a treat in your hand.
- After your puppy enters the crate, praise him, give him the treat, and close the door.
- Sit quietly near the crate for five to ten minutes, and then go into another room for a short time. Then let him out of the crate.

Repeat this process several times a day, gradually increasing the length of time you leave him in the crate and the length of time you're out of his sight.

Once your dog will stay quietly in the crate for about 30 minutes with you mostly out of sight, you can begin leaving him crated when you're gone for short time periods and/or letting him sleep there at night. This may take several days or weeks.



○ STEP 4A: CRATE YOUR DOG WHEN YOU LEAVE

After your puppy can spend about 30 minutes in the crate without becoming anxious or afraid, you can begin leaving him crated for short periods when you leave the house.

Put him in the crate using your regular command and a treat. You might also want to leave him with a few safe toys in the crate.

Vary at what point in your "getting ready to leave" routine you put your puppy in the crate. Although he shouldn't be crated for a long time before you leave, you can crate him anywhere from five to 20 minutes prior to leaving.

Don't make your departures emotional and prolonged--they should be matter-of-fact. Praise your puppy briefly, give him a treat for entering the crate, and then leave quietly.

When you return home, don't reward your dog for excited behavior by responding to him in an excited, enthusiastic way. Keep arrivals low key to avoid increasing his anxiety over when you will return. Continue to crate your puppy for short periods from time to time when you're home so he doesn't associate crating with being left alone. These steps will help to minimize separation anxiety.

○ STEP 4B: CRATE YOUR DOG AT NIGHT

Put your dog in the crate using your regular command and a treat. Initially, it may be a good idea to put the crate in your bedroom or nearby in a hallway. Puppies often need to go outside to eliminate during the night, and you'll want to be able to hear your puppy when he whines to be let outside. Older dogs, too, should initially be kept nearby so they don't associate the crate with social isolation.

Once your puppy is sleeping comfortably through the night with his crate near you, you can begin to gradually move it to the location you prefer, although time spent with your dog--even sleep time--is a chance to strengthen the bond between you and your pet.



Potential Problems

○ WHINING

If your puppy whines or cries while in the crate at night, it may be difficult to decide whether he's whining to be let out of the crate, or whether he needs to be let outside to eliminate. If you've followed the training procedures outlined above, then your puppy hasn't been rewarded for whining in the past by being released from his crate. If that is the case, try to ignore the whining. If your puppy is just testing you, he'll probably stop whining soon. Yelling at him or pounding on the crate will only make things worse.

If the whining continues after you've ignored him for several minutes, use the phrase he associates with going outside to eliminate. If he responds and becomes excited, take him outside. This should be a trip with a purpose, not play time. If you're convinced that your dog doesn't need to eliminate, the best response is to ignore him until he stops whining. Don't give in; if you do, you'll teach your puppy to whine loud and long to get what he wants.

If you've progressed gradually through the training steps and haven't done too much too fast, you'll be less likely to encounter this problem. If the problem becomes unmanageable, you may need to start the crate training process over again.

○ SEPARATION ANXIETY

Attempting to use the crate as a remedy for separation anxiety won't solve the problem. A crate may prevent your dog from being destructive, but he may injure himself in an attempt to escape from the crate. Separation anxiety problems can only be resolved with counterconditioning and desensitization procedures. You may want to consult a professional animal-behavior specialist for help.

○ CHEWING

Sooner or later every dog lover returns home to find some unexpected damage inflicted by his or her dog; or more specifically, that dog's teeth. Although dogs make great use of their vision and sense of smell to explore the world, one of their favorite ways to take in new information is to put their mouths to work.

Fortunately, chewing can be directed onto appropriate items so your dog isn't destroying things you value or jeopardizing his own safety. Until he's learned what he can and can't chew, however, it's your responsibility to manage the situation as much as possible, so he doesn't have the opportunity to chew on unacceptable objects.

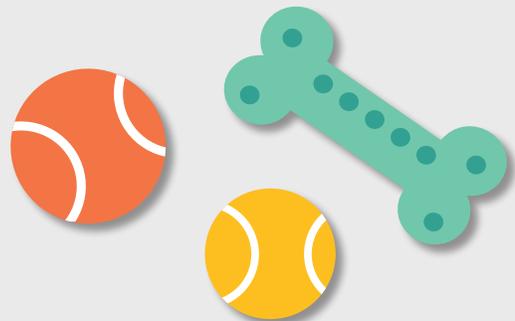


Why Dogs Chew

Puppies, like infants and toddlers, explore their world by putting objects in their mouths. And, like babies, they teethe for about 6 months, which usually creates some discomfort. Chewing not only facilitates teething, but also makes sore gums feel better. Adult dogs may engage in destructive chewing for any number of reasons. In order to deal with the behavior, you must first determine why your dog is chewing--and remember, he's not doing it to spite you. Possible reasons for destructive chewing include:

- As a puppy, he wasn't taught what to chew and what not to chew.
- He's bored.
- He suffers from separation anxiety.
- His behavior is fear-related.
- He wants attention.

Important! You may need to consult a behavior professional for help with both separation anxiety and fear-related behaviors.





Manage the Situation

DOG-PROOF YOUR HOME

Take responsibility for your own belongings. If you don't want it in your dog's mouth, don't make it available. Keep clothing, shoes, books, trash, eyeglasses, and remote control devices out of your dog's reach.

SOCK MONKEYS, NOT SOCKS

Give your dog toys that are clearly distinguishable from household goods. Don't confuse him by offering shoes and socks as toys and then expecting him to distinguish between his shoe and yours.

RULES ARE RULES

Supervise your dog until he learns the house rules. Keep him with you on his leash in the house so he can't make a mistake out of your sight. Confine him when you're unable to keep an eye on him. Choose a "safe space" that's dog proof, and provide fresh water and "safe" toys. If your dog is crate trained, you may also place him in his crate for short periods of time.

STAY SOCIAL

Give your dog plenty of people-time. Your dog won't know how to behave if you don't teach him alternatives to inappropriate behavior, and he can't learn these when he's in the yard by himself.

WARD OFF BOREDOM

Give your dog plenty of physical and mental exercise. If your dog is bored he'll find something to do to amuse himself and you probably won't like the choices he makes. On the other hand, a tired dog is a good dog so, make sure he gets lots of physical and mental activity. The amount of exercise should be based on his age, health, and breed characteristics.

PRAISE FOR TOYS

If you catch your dog chewing on something he shouldn't, interrupt the behavior with a loud noise. Offer him an acceptable chew toy instead, and praise him lavishly when he takes the toy in his mouth.

PREP FOR CHEWING

Build a toy obsession in your dog. Use his toys to feed him. At mealtimes, fill a Kong-type toy with his kibble. Make items unpleasant for your dog. Furniture and other items can be coated with a taste deterrent (such as Bitter Apple) to make them unappealing. Caution! Supervise your dog when you first try one of these deterrents. Some dogs will chew an object even if it's coated with a taste deterrent. Also be aware that you must re-apply some these deterrents to maintain their effectiveness.

TRADE-OFF WITH TREATS

Offer your dog a treat in exchange for the item in his mouth. As your dog catches on to this idea, you can add the command "give" as his cue to release the object in exchange for the yummy treat. Although counter-intuitive, this process does not reward bad behavior but teaches to relinquish an item to you.

RESIST THE CHASE

Don't chase your dog if he grabs an object and runs. If you chase him, you are only giving your dog what he wants. Being chased by his human is fun! Instead call him to you or offer him a treat.

LEARN TO FORGIVE

Have realistic expectations. At some point your puppy will inevitably chew up something you value; this is often part of the transition to a new home. Your puppy needs time to learn the house rules, and you need to remember to take precautions and keep things out of his reach.

What Not To Do



Never discipline or punish your dog after the fact. If you discover a chewed item even minutes after he's chewed it, you're too late.

Animals associate punishment with what they're doing at the moment they're being corrected.

Your dog can't reason that "I tore up those shoes an hour ago and that's why I'm being scolded now." Some people believe this is what a dog is thinking because he runs and hides or because he "looks guilty." In reality, "guilty looks" are actually canine submissive postures that dogs show when they're threatened. When you're angry and upset, your dog feels threatened by your tone of voice, body postures, and/or facial expressions, so he may hide or show submissive postures.

Punishment after the fact will not only fail to eliminate the undesirable behavior, but could provoke other undesirable behaviors as well.



Sangaree
ANIMAL HOSPITAL

(843) 871.0543
SangareeAnimalHospital.com