



BEHAVIOR
SERIES

Housetraining Your Puppy

CONTRARY TO popular belief, housetraining a puppy requires far more than a few stacks of old newspapers—it calls for vigilance, patience, and plenty of commitment. By following the procedures outlined below, you can minimize house soiling incidents, but virtually every puppy will have an accident in the house, and more likely, several. Expect this—it's part of raising a puppy. The more consistent you are in following the basic housetraining procedures, however, 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. Take your puppy outside frequently—at least every two hours—and immediately after he wakes up from a nap, after playing, and after eating or drinking.

Praise your puppy lavishly every time he eliminates outdoors—you can even give him a treat—but 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.

Pick a bathroom spot near the door, and always take your puppy to that spot using a leash. Take him out for a longer walk or some playtime only after he has eliminated. If you clean up an accident in the house, take the soiled rags or paper towels and leave them in the bathroom spot. The smell will help your puppy recognize the area as the place he is supposed to eliminate. 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.

Put your puppy on a regular feeding schedule and feed him a high-quality diet to make housetraining easier.

Depending on their age, puppies usually need to be fed three or four times a day. Feeding your puppy at the same times 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.

Keep Your Eyes Peeled

Don't give your puppy an opportunity to soil in the house; keep an eye on him whenever he's indoors. You can tether him to you with a six-foot leash, or use baby gates to keep him in the room where you are. Watch for signs that he needs to eliminate, like 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 him with a treat.

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. Or you may want to crate train your puppy and use the crate to confine him. (Be sure to learn how to use a crate

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