

5 Steps to House Training a Puppy

Step 1: Put your puppy on a schedule

Feeding schedule

Puppies should be given 3 meals a day. This doesn't mean to fill up his food bowl three times a day. It means you should measure the correct amount of food, place the food bowl down on the floor for up to 15 min, letting the dog eat during that time and then picking it back up and emptying it out.

Efficient and scheduled eating is key when potty training a puppy. His body will become used to this schedule and things will go easier.

Water should be available every hour and as your dog learns to only go potty outside become available throughout the day.

Potty training a puppy schedule

Take your dog outside after **3 key events**:

- Right after waking up
- After each one of his meals
- After playtime.

These are the times at which the puppy will need to eliminate and because you can arrange for these times to be scheduled according to your availability, you can use them to teach your dog to **ONLY** eliminate outside.

When you take your puppy outside you have to wait until he eliminates. Do not come inside before that happens! Patience...

Restraining schedule

When potty training a puppy, it is important to confine the pup to avoid accidents. You have several options for this:

Crate: the crate should be big enough for the dog to get in, turn around and lay down. If the crate is bigger your dog might find a spot to pee and still sleep comfortably away from it.

Leash: the leash should be attached to you through your belt for example. If you work at home or can take time off to train your puppy this method is great. It will prevent your puppy from getting out of your sight and having an accident without your noticing. If he is about to have an accident you will see it and be able to remedy it right away by taking him outside. This technique will also help you bond with your furry friend even more.

Puppy gate, pen or small room: If you do not want to use a crate or a leash, then you can confine your pet to a small area of the house by using a puppy gate or a pen. You can also use a small room, like a bathroom with easy to clean floors. This is mainly to avoid having to clean all over the house, it will simplify things until your puppy is fully potty trained.

Step 2: Click and praise appropriate elimination

The key to potty training a puppy successfully is to click and praise appropriate behavior.

When you take your pet outside after a meal or waking up, let your dog explore and **pay NO attention to him**. You must appear uninterested. This is important for what is about to happen.

The moment your puppy finishes his business you will click, praise, treat, celebrate and play...**yes, take your time to do all this**. After your puppy is done, play or go for a short walk. These are great rewards that will strengthen outside elimination in your dog.

Never go back inside the house right after elimination. Your pet might learn that going potty signals going back inside, and he might start delaying this event. Instead, spending a few minutes after he is done with play and walk time will make this a great routine your dog will want to continue doing.

Using a clicker to mark the correct behavior is great because the timing will be excellent, and the dog already has a good association with the click sound.

Step 3: Learn your puppy body signals

Using a schedule is a great way to teach your pet a routine but life is often more complicated than that.

Potty training a puppy also requires that you learn how to read your pet's body signals. Your dog will show specific cues when he needs to go potty. These could be subtle things, so your keen eye needs to stay alert throughout the training process to learn this.

Common behaviors are circling, smelling, walking towards the door that leads outside, pawing the door or trying to get your attention.

Learning these body cues your dog performs before going potty will help you on days where the schedule has been changed. Pay attention and take your dog outside as soon as you notice them!

Step 4: Never punish your puppy for accidents

What happens if your dog has an accident inside the house? There are two options and if you follow them correctly you will be helping your dog learn faster.

Option #1: You found a soiled area but never actually saw the dog having the accident. In this case DO NOT punish your dog (NEVER yell, hit, kick your puppy), clean the area with an enzymatic cleaner and continue with the plan. Ignore this mishap.

Option #2: You actually see your puppy squatting down about to "have an accident". Say "HA HA" , "OOPS" or any other gently but firm word. This is meant to interrupt him so you can lead him or carry him outside. Let him finish in the yard and after he is done ... click and praise! Play for a little while and then come back inside.

Step 5: More freedom

As your puppy starts growing older and learning to go potty outside, you can start giving your pet more freedom.

Let him stay outside of the crate more often and make sure he has water available throughout the day.

Troubleshooting potty training a puppy

- ***I have read that if the puppy has an accident, I have to rub his nose in it to teach him it is wrong. Is this true?***

Answer: NO! Animals learn primarily through Classical and Operant Conditioning. They associate an event or their behavior with a consequence. These associations happen only if the two events are close in time, **withing 2 seconds of each other**.

What does this mean? If you punish your pet (by rubbing his nose on the soiled area or any other form of punishment) for something he did in the past, he won't understand it is because of him peeing inside. Your puppy will think he was punished for whatever it is he was doing 2 seconds before the punishment (sleeping, playing, etc.).

We currently have no means of telling a dog that something that he did in the past was wrong, as we would tell a child or adult human. Our best options are **a)** to catch the dog in the act and lead him outside and/or **b)** praise him when he eliminates outside.

- ***I am sure my puppy keeps peeing inside because he is mad at me for leaving him alone! What do I do?***

Dogs don't think like humans, in terms of jealousy, hate and revenge. If you are still having problems after following the above potty training a puppy steps I suggest:

1. Take your pup to the vet and make sure a urinary infection is not the problem.
2. Take your pet outside more often, until there are no more accidents.
3. Try different reinforcement methods after your puppy eliminates outside (treat, walk, play, favorite toy, etc.). You have to be able to reinforce outside potty training many times before the dog starts learning.
4. Try cleaning the soiled areas better, always use enzymatic cleaners.
5. You might be moving too fast, go back a few steps and reinforce good behavior!