

HOUSETRAINING

Housetraining does not need to be an overly difficult or stressful time in your life. When armed with the basic knowledge of when your puppy will need to eliminate (or go, or soil, or defecate, or mess, or piddle) and the tools to best manage this process, success is just around the corner.

To housetrain or housebreak a puppy is to train her to eliminate only outside your house in approved areas. Paper training, on the other hand, teaches your puppy to eliminate in a designated area of the house, usually onto a pile of newspapers. However, it is much easier for your puppy to go outside from the beginning. Teaching her to use the newspapers in the house first and then changing the rules to expect her to eliminate only outside is confusing for her and will only drag out the process of housebreaking.



A puppy's ability to control her urine flow is controlled by the sphincter muscles which will not be fully developed until about 15 weeks of age. A good rule of thumb to remember is that a pup can hold her bladder for one hour for each month of age, plus one hour. Around four to five months your puppy will begin to be able to make it through the night but will still need to be walked more frequently during the day.

If you know when your pup is most likely to "hear the call of nature," you will be able to give her the greatest chance to eliminate outside successfully. The more opportunities you give your puppy to go out and "take care of business" in an appropriate place, the more quickly she will learn.

Your puppy should predictably need to go out to relieve herself in these situations:

- Immediately after waking up in the morning
- About 10-20 minutes after a meal or drinking water
- Right after a nap
- After playing / exercising

Additionally, you should walk your puppy just before your bedtime and anytime you see her giving "potty signals" such as sniffing the carpet, circling a particular spot or quickly leaving the room.

Now that you know how to predict your pup's need to eliminate, you can build a reliable schedule to accommodate her. First, divide your pup's food into three portions. You will be feeding in the morning, at mid-day and at night. Also, a dog

needs about a cup of water per eight pounds of weight, so approximate this and divide the amount into three portions. Let your puppy and your common sense be your guides here. If she seems to need more or less water, adjust your portions. Before putting together your schedule, consider these helpful points. In the beginning, use the same spot for elimination every day. This spot will look and smell familiar to your puppy and will encourage her to go. Use a command phrase like “hurry up” that your puppy can associate with the deed. Calmly say, “hurry up” as she is being walked and say “good hurry up” encouragingly as she is eliminating. After she has “done her thing” outside, praise her and go right back inside unless she appears to have a second potty in mind. Use her potty walks for the purpose of elimination only. The potty spot, the command phrase, your praise and a quick return home will all tell her that this walk has had a purpose, to get down to business (so to speak).

Sooooo, all that having been said and done, here is a sample schedule for a four-month-old puppy.

WAKE-UP – Walk your puppy first thing in the morning. If she doesn’t eliminate, feed and water her, wait 10-20 minutes and try again.

BREAKFAST – Food and water.

10-20 MINUTES LATER – Walk, using all the tricks that you have learned.

NOON – Walk, feed and water.

10-20 MINUTES LATER – Walk.

NO MORE THAN 4 HOURS LATER – Walk.

DINNER – Last food and water. *No more food or water until morning.*

10-20 MINUTES LATER – Walk.

BEDTIME – Walk. Confine her to her crate (if she has one) or to a room where messes can be cleaned up easily (the laundry room, for instance.)

Know where your puppy is at all times!

Your consistency is the greatest insurance you have for success. Make your own customized schedule and then stick to it (potty schedules have no weekends or holidays). It may be helpful to hire a neighborhood kid or a pet sitter to drop in around 4:00 to walk your dog if your job is not flexible. When you are at home, your supervision is critical to reduce the number of mistakes your puppy might make. Close off rooms that your pup can disappear into, lower the toilet lid and remember to put up the cat’s water. Confinement at night is the best way to at least minimize the damage urination can do to your carpet.

Despite all of your best efforts and your puppy’s intentions to please you, she will make mistakes from time to time. If you catch her in the act, make a loud noise to stop your pup in the act, scoop her up and take her outside to complete the task. Praise her when she has finished. You may have heard that rubbing her nose in the mess is a good way to teach her a lesson. Your puppy is an infant who will make infant mistakes until taught otherwise. Rubbing her nose in the

mess makes about as much sense as rubbing a baby's nose in her wet diaper. If you find a mess after the fact, do not punish her since your puppy lacks the ability to associate the mess that she made (even two minutes ago) with your anger. The use of an odor neutralizer made just for this task, such as "Natures Miracle," will clean and deodorize the spot. Never use ammonia, since this is one of the components of urine and can actually attract your puppy back to that spot again.

Naturally, since you want your dog to be a canine good citizen, it can be assumed that you yourself are a good citizen and always pick up your dog's messes in public places. Grocery store produce bags are ideal for this task.

If you are able to consistently apply the rules you have learned here, you can reasonably expect success within two to eight weeks. By the time your puppy is eight months old, she should be able to hold her bladder well with three walks a day. Remember, housetraining is just a short period in the life of your dog. The two of you will have many happy, dry days together in the future.

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