

Use Natural Instincts for Housetraining of Puppies

Please try to understand that puppy physiology, anatomy and behavioral needs are different from people. Learning about natural canine instincts will help you understand better how to help your puppy learn quickly and easily – by 12 weeks of age – to eliminate in a chosen place at times acceptable to you. It's rewarding to understand and reinforce natural instincts for a puppy to want to please you.

Puppies have a strong natural instinct to eliminate – “pee and poop” – away from their den or resting places. Use this natural instinct in your home to prevent unwanted elimination by confining puppy to a den or small area where puppy will try not to eliminate. But, puppy should not be confined longer than is appropriate for puppy's age – the length of time puppy can hold its urine. Most puppies at 4 weeks need to eliminate every 2 to 3 hours. But by 8 weeks, they may have control to hold urine for up to 4 to 5 hours. By 12 to 16 weeks, they have control up to 8 hours and can sleep through the night without eliminating. By 5 to 6 months of age, they have bladder control to hold urine for 10 to 14 hours, depending on the amount and the time of liquid intake.

Prevent house soiling accidents by keeping puppy in view at all times when not confined. Confine in a den or a small area when you cannot keep puppy in view. Do not let your puppy wander out of your eyesight. Use a 10-foot cord or special indoor lead to keep puppy in view and near you. But, when puppy sniffs and circles around or starts to squat, quickly take puppy to a desired elimination area. Most soiling accidents occur at natural times for puppy elimination – shortly after resting or sleeping, after eating or drinking, after playing or exercising or after taking them out of their crate or confinement area.

Natural instincts encourage puppies to eliminate in an area where they can smell odors of previous elimination. Use this to encourage puppy to urinate and defecate in a place you choose. That is why it is so important to prevent elimination in unwanted places in the home because each unwanted elimination/accident encourages puppy to try again in the unwanted place. Prevention of the unwanted behavior is the key to success – puppy should not be allowed to leave urine odor or find a previous urine odor in an unwanted area inside your home.

**If you fail to prevent your puppy from having a soiling accident
DON'T SCOLD PUPPY - DON'T RUB PUPPY'S NOSE IN IT
Do quietly clean up and remove odor from the soiled area**

Remember - it's a family responsibility to prevent future soiling accidents

Puppies respond eagerly and quickly to rewards that motivate. Use this natural response to reward puppy as it starts to eliminate in your chosen area and as it finishes. If you love and care for your puppy, use the motivation of rewards such as praise, petting and food to help puppy learn elimination behaviors acceptable to you while using natural instincts of your puppy.



Puppies learn best from birth to 16 weeks of age.

The optimal period for housetraining is from 4 to 16 weeks of age.

Be prepared to start housetraining when you bring your puppy home at 7 to 8 weeks of age.

Keep puppy confined or in view at all times to prevent accidents.

Prevention is the key to successful, quick and easy housetraining.

Housetraining Your New Puppy

Goodpuppy Social Club™

It takes time, and it takes patience, but we sincerely hope you will put your best efforts into teaching your pet good toilet habits since he will be sharing your house for the next 12-14 years! This handout outlines a humane housetraining program based on praise and prevention, not punishment. If followed carefully, the results will be a happy, well-trained dog.

The key principles in successful housetraining are:

- **Prevention**

Limit puppy's opportunities to eliminate in the wrong places by keeping her confined when you can't keep a constant watch on what puppy is doing.

- **Routine**

Feed puppy a measured amount three times a day so you monitor pup's mealtime and know when to take him outside to eliminate after each meal.

- **Anticipation**

Take puppy out at times she is likely to have to eliminate. This includes after sleeping or resting, after being confined, after playing and shortly after eating. Walking around in a circle and sniffing the floor are signs puppy may be about to eliminate, so take her outside immediately!

- **Praise**

Softly praise puppy while he is eliminating in the location you've selected for him. When he has finished, lavish on the attention - petting, verbal praise and don't forget a tasty treat!

We encourage you to train your puppy to go to the bathroom outside from the beginning rather than paper training. Your aim from the first day is to **catch your puppy being successful** and give her the praise she deserves for doing it right. Puppy really does want to please you and get some loving attention, and she will catch on very quickly that you seem truly thrilled with her when she eliminates behind the old lilac bush. If you do catch puppy eliminating in the house, **DO NOT PUNISH puppy - NO HITTING - NO SHAKING - NO RUBBING PUPPY'S NOSE IN THE MESS!** These things not only DON'T help, they can make your puppy fearful and training that much harder. When you catch puppy eliminating indoors, just scoop her up and take her outside at once. And that's all!

One of the basic rules of housetraining is that if you don't see him do it, don't scold him about it. When he's caught in the act and is taken outside, he makes the connection that wetting on the Oriental rug was not a great idea. But if you drag him to a damp spot on the carpet hours (or even minutes) after the fact, he simply can't make the connection. He may learn to anticipate being punished when there is a mess on the carpet, but puppies do not make the extra connection that they need to stop eliminating in the house to prevent being punished the next time. When you find a spot after the fact, don't make a fuss and rush the dog outside; just accept that you lost that round, clean it up and forget it. For cleaning up accidents, use one of the enzymatic cleaners available at most pet supply stores or use diluted white vinegar in the last rinse to remove odors which might tempt him to use the same spot again.

Since your aim is to praise puppy for being successful, it's important that you give her the chance to earn praise by anticipating her need to go outside. There are certain times when you can be almost certain your puppy will need to eliminate - take puppy out after eating, when she wakes up in the morning or after a nap and after a playing session. Some puppies want to eliminate immediately after such activities, other some minutes later; you will soon learn your puppy's pattern. If you watch your puppy closely to learn what signals she gives before eliminating (sniffing, restlessness, circling), you will be able to get him outside soon enough to prevent accidents at other times as well.

This program of prevention and praise requires you to keep an eye on puppy. Some accidents are inevitable, but you just can't give him the run of the house and let him get used to making mistakes. Use a baby gate or a ten-foot lead to keep puppy with you where you can watch him. Some people have also taken the step of tying the puppy's leash to their belt, so puppy can't wander off on his own and get into trouble.

The use of a crate in housetraining a puppy can be a useful tool. But it can also be misused. A sleeping size crate takes advantage of a dog's natural instinct not to soil his "den" or sleeping quarters, a trait held over from his wolf ancestors. Since no one can watch a puppy every minute, a crate is useful for confining a small puppy for a short time while you run to the store or take a shower. A crate could also be properly used as a good sleeping place for an older puppy who is almost at the stage of making it through the night without a trip outdoors. (The crate will encourage him to wait, but place it in or near your bedroom so he can wake you if he really needs to be taken out.) But placing a puppy in a sleeping size crate for hours at a time is unfair. He cannot control his bowel and bladder for very long and is forced to dirty his bed and himself. If a small puppy must be left for more than brief periods, a far more humane practice is to prepare a pen (partition off part of a room or use an old baby playpen) with a sleeping area, a playing area and a papered area where it is OK for him to eliminate.

You probably have noticed that we used the phrase "take puppy out" throughout this handout. Even if you have a fenced yard, it is important to take your puppy out to go to the bathroom. If you just shove him out the door, you won't know if he has eliminated and you're skipping that essential part of training: praise. In addition, he's going to get into the bad habit of eliminating just outside the door. It's best (for both puppy and your lawn) to take him to a selected spot each time so that he gets used to the idea that he is expected to eliminate there. Some experts also advocate consistent use of a brief phrase like "do your business" to help your puppy understand you brought him out at 2:00 a.m. in your pajamas because you thought he had to go the bathroom, not because you wanted to play.

If your puppy continues to have accidents at a favorite spot even though you have cleaned it thoroughly, make that spot unappealing by such methods as covering with a plastic runner (use the point side up) or laying down a section of double-side tape.

Paper training is a method which is usually considered to be an intermediate step (except, perhaps, in the case of a very small dog in an apartment building). It may be necessary if the weather is really too bitter to take a small puppy outdoors or if the owner cannot be home as much as needed for outdoor training. It does add an extra step to the training process and it may take longer for you to get to the final goals of a completely housetrained pet. When paper training, confine the puppy to a small room or part of a room, and put papers down over the entire area. Gradually remove the papers farthest from his favored spot for eliminating, always leaving a piece of soiled paper at that spot to encourage the puppy to return there. Proceed as you would with outdoor training. Take the puppy to the paper when she shows signs needing to eliminate, praise for proper performance and learn to anticipate when he's likely to need to go. When the puppy is more mature and able to go for longer intervals without eliminating, remove the inside papers, place a soiled paper at the chosen spot outside and take him out frequently, praising him for eliminating out-of-doors. The unfortunate thing about paper training is that the puppy may have a hard time understanding why it's no longer OK for him to eliminate in the house when he was praised for it before. Be patient with him and be sure the former paper spot has been cleaned thoroughly to remove his smell.

Please don't expect too much too soon. A 3 or 4 month old puppy cannot really be considered housetrained. He may know what you want, but his immature body will cause him to make mistakes. These will decrease as his system matures, but it is not unusual for a puppy to still have an occasional slip at 8 or 9 months, especially if you are gone longer than normal.

Crate Training Your Puppy

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Crating a puppy is a procedure widely recommended by trainers, groomers, veterinarians, animal shelters, and behaviorists. Crating is based on the idea that dogs are denning animals. In the wild many canid species use a small cave or dug-out area to give birth to pups and for protection while sleeping or resting. However, contrary to what some sources would lead you to believe, wild canids do not spend their day in the den. Crating, while a useful tool in many situations, can be over-used and improperly used.

Using a crate as a housetraining aid has two purposes. First, it makes it easier to supervise the puppy and prevents him from having complete access to the house where he is likely to get into mischief. Second, since puppies have a natural tendency not to soil their den or sleeping area, the puppy will be unlikely to eliminate in her crate, and more likely to eliminate when she is taken outside. Problems can develop if a crate is used in ways at odds with these premises.

Puppy should not be confined longer than is appropriate for puppy's age – the length of time puppy can hold its urine. Most puppies at 4 weeks need to eliminate every 2 to 3 hours. But by 8 weeks, they may have control to hold urine for up to 4 to 5 hours. By 12 to 16 weeks, they have control up to 8 hours and can sleep through the night without eliminating. By 5 to 6 months of age, they have bladder control to hold urine for 10 to 14 hours, depending on the amount and the time of liquid intake. Puppies should not be confined in a crate at any one time longer than they can hold their urine according to their physiologic age.

Crate training can be accomplished in several days, or may take several weeks, depending on the age, temperament, and previous experiences your puppy has had. You should keep two things in mind while training your puppy to a crate. **First**, the crate should always be associated with something pleasant for the puppy, and **second**, training should take place in a series of small steps - don't try to do too much too fast.

Step 1: Introducing your puppy to the crate.

Put the crate in an area of your house where you and your family spend a lot of time, such as the family room or kitchen. Put a soft sleeping blanket or towel in the crate. Bring your puppy over to the crate and talk to him in an excited, happy tone of voice. Make sure the door to the crate is securely fastened open so it won't accidentally hit your puppy and frighten him.

Drop some small tidbits of food around the crate, just inside the door, and then gradually all the way inside to encourage your puppy to enter. If she doesn't go all the way in at first to get the food, that's OK. **DO NOT** force her to enter. Repeat this experience until your puppy will calmly walk into the crate to obtain a piece of food. If your puppy isn't interested in food, try tossing a favorite toy in the crate instead. This process may take just a few minutes, or as long as several days.

Step 2: Feeding your puppy in the crate.

After your puppy has been introduced to the crate, you can begin feeding him his regular meals near the crate for a while. This will create pleasant associations with the crate and decrease any fear he has of the crate. If your puppy is readily entering the crate when you begin step 2, you can place the food dish all the way at the back of the crate. However, if your puppy is still reluctant to enter the crate, then place the dish right in front of the open door or as far inside as he will readily go without becoming fearful or anxious. Each time you feed him, place the dish a little more toward the back of the crate.

Once your puppy is comfortably eating his food while standing in the crate, you can close the door while he's eating. At first, open the door as soon as he finishes his meal, let him out, and praise him. With each succeeding feeding, leave the door closed a few minutes longer, until he is staying in the crate without protesting for 10 minutes or so after eating. If he begins to whine to be let out, you may have increased the duration of crating too quickly. Next time, try leaving him for a shorter time. Be sure to release him from the crate when he is not whining or barking. If vocalizing results in release, the behavior will be reinforced and a problem will develop.

Step 3: Conditioning your puppy to the crate for longer periods.

After your puppy is eating her regular meals in the crate with no sign of fear or anxiety, you can begin to confine her there for short periods while you are home. Begin by calling her over to the crate in return for a food reward. Give her a command to enter such as "kennel up". You can encourage her to do so by pointing to the inside of the crate with a tidbit of a favorite food in your hand. After your puppy enters the crate, reward her with the tidbit and close the door. Sit quietly near the crate for 5 or 10 minutes and then go out of sight into another room for a few minutes. When you return, sit quietly again for a short time, and then release your puppy. Repeat this procedure several times a day. With each repetition, gradually increase the length of time the puppy is crated, and the length of time you are out of sight. Once your puppy will quietly remain in the crate for about 30 minutes, you can begin leaving her crated when you are gone for short periods, and/or letting her sleep there at night. It may take several days or several weeks to get to this point.

Step 4: Crating when left alone.

After your puppy is spending about 30 minutes in the crate without becoming anxious or afraid while you are there, you can begin leaving him crated for short periods while you are gone. Put him in the crate with your regular "kennel up" or a similar command. You will want to vary at what point you put your puppy in the crate during the process of getting ready to leave. Although he should not be crated for a long period before you leave, you can crate him anywhere from 2 to 20 minutes prior to leaving. **Do not** make departures emotional and prolonged, but matter-of-fact instead. Praise your puppy briefly and give him a tidbit for entering the crate, and then leave quietly. When you arrive home **do not** inadvertently reward your puppy for excited behavior by responding to him in an excited, enthusiastic way. Keep arrivals very low key and reserve playful, excited greeting behavior for after he has been let outside and has calmed down somewhat. **Continue to crate your puppy for short periods from time to time when you are home so that he does not begin to associate crating with being left alone.**

Crating at Night. Follow the same procedure you have been using to encourage your puppy to enter his crate willingly. Initially, it may be a good idea (especially if you have a young puppy) to locate 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 she whines to be let outside. Initially, older puppies should also be kept nearby so that crating does not become associated with social isolation. Once your puppy is sleeping comfortably through the night with her crate near you, you can begin to gradually move it to the location you prefer.

Whining. If your puppy whines or cries while in the crate at night, it may be difficult to decide whether he is whining to be let out of the crate, or if he needs to be let outside to eliminate. If you follow the training procedure outlined above, your puppy should not have been reinforced by being let out of the crate when whining. Initially you can ignore the whining. Your puppy may stop if he is just testing to see if he'll be let out. Yelling at him or pounding on the crate may only increase his vocalizations. If the whining continues after you have ignored it for several minutes, you can repeat the phrase your puppy has associated 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 are **convinced** that your puppy does not need to eliminate, the best response is to ignore the whining completely. Most attempts at punishing the behavior actually end up inadvertently reinforcing it because the puppy is getting attention from you. During the process of ignoring whining, expect it to get worse before it gets better. **You cannot give in, otherwise you will have taught your puppy that he must whine loud and long to get what he wants!** If you have progressed very gradually through the training steps and have not attempted to hurry the process and cut corners, you will not be likely to encounter this problem. If the problem becomes unmanageable, you may need to restart the crate training process from the very beginning.



A puppy should never be crated as punishment for misbehavior!