

YOUR NEW BEST FRIEND: HOUSETRAINING

House-training your new dog requires patience, commitment, and consistency. Like children, puppies do best with a consistent schedule and positive reinforcement. They can be easily stressed by punishment. While accidents should be expected in the beginning, following the tips here should have your new family member house-trained in just a few weeks. Of course, sometimes an adult shelter dog has never been house-trained, and in those cases, these guidelines still apply but it might take a little longer for them to understand.

Routine

Dogs love routines—eating, playing, sleeping, and pottyng are all best done on a schedule so your puppy knows what to expect and what is appropriate. The general rule is that a dog can hold their bladder for one hour for every month of their age. So, a three month old puppy can hold it for about three hours.

- *Take frequent potty breaks:* Take your dog out immediately after waking up, before going to bed, after eating, and during play. Getting excited is especially stimulating for puppies and they will need to potty more often.
- *Find a potty spot:* Find a spot in the yard and take your dog there each time to potty. While they are relieving themselves, praise them with a specific word or phrase. Eventually, you can say the word or phrase before they go and it will remind them of what to do. Reward them with a longer walk or playtime after they've pottied.
- *Reward your dog every time:* Praise or reward your dog with a small treat immediately after they've finished eliminating properly. Don't wait until they come back inside. This reward or praise is crucial—it is the only way for your dog to understand what is expected of them.
- *Feed them on a schedule:* Keeping everything on a schedule makes things easier for you and for them. including feeding. Feeding your dog on a schedule will help ensure that they need to potty on a schedule, too. This helps make house-training that much easier.
- *Take water away at bedtime:* Remove your dog's water about two hours before bedtime to help reduce the likelihood of midnight accidents. Most puppies and dogs can sleep about seven hours without needing to go outside. If they wake during the night, stay relaxed and quiet, turn on as few lights as possible, take them out and then straight back to bed. Engaging too much will invite them to play and they will have trouble going back to sleep.



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Mistakes happen

House-training is a learning process and mistakes will happen.

- If you catch your dog in the act, don't yell or scold. Interrupt them and take them outside immediately. When they resume their business, praise them.
- Clean any soiled indoor areas thoroughly . Once a spot smells like urine or feces, it is very difficult to break a dog from soiling the same area again. Avoid harsh cleaners like bleach or ammonia as the very strong smells may motivate your puppy to mark the area again. Use pet-specific cleaners and odor neutralizers.
- Under *NO* circumstances should you *EVER* punish your dog for eliminating in the house. Once you've found an accident, the moment for correction has passed. Just clean it up and move on. Punishing your dog, rubbing his nose in it, pulling him over to the area, or yelling at him will only make him afraid of you or afraid to eliminate in your presence.

To minimize accidents, supervise your dog and anticipate when he needs to go outside. Keep him in the room with you when you are in the house and watch for signs that he needs to go out, like restlessness or sniffing. While accidents are to be expected, it is important to keep them at a minimum to prevent your puppy from being confused about what you want and prolonging the house-training process.

If you have to be away

If you have to be away from home for a large part of the day, make plans to help your dog stay on track.

- Tire your dog out by taking them for a long play session or walk before you leave (with enough time in between playing and you leaving to allow for another post-excitement potty break).
- Arrange for someone to take your dog for walks and bathroom breaks at the same frequency as would happen if you were home.
- Train your dog to eliminate in one specific place inside, such as on puppy pads. Be aware that doing this can prolong house-training and even create life-long surface preferences, but it may be the only option depending on your schedule.

