

Mistakes happen

Expect your dog or puppy to have a few accidents in the house—it's a normal part of housetraining and it's even normal for house-trained dogs to have accidents when they experience a change in environment or adjust to a new home after being in a shelter setting. Here's what to do when that happens:

Interrupt your dog or puppy when you catch them in the act.

Make a startling noise (be careful not to scare them) or say "OUTSIDE!" and immediately take them to their bathroom spot. Praise your pup and give a treat if they finish there.

Don't punish your dog or puppy for eliminating in the house. If you find a soiled area, it's too late to administer a correction. Just clean it up. Rubbing your puppy's nose in it, taking them to the spot and scolding them or any other punishment will only make them afraid of you or afraid to eliminate in your presence. Punishment will often do more harm than good. Never hit, spank, or yell at a dog or puppy.

Clean the soiled area thoroughly. Puppies are highly motivated to continue soiling in areas that smell like urine or feces. If you can't eliminate the smell or habit with normal cleaners, try a product that is made specifically to breakdown urine proteins.

It's extremely important that you use these supervision and confinement procedures to minimize the number of accidents. If you allow your dog or puppy to eliminate frequently in the house, they'll get confused about where they're supposed to go, which will prolong the housetraining process.

Make plans for when you're away

If you have to be away from home more than four or five hours a day, this may not be the best time for you to get a puppy or a new dog. Instead, you may want to consider an older dog who is already housetrained and can wait for your return. If you already have a puppy and must be away for long periods of time, you'll need to:

Arrange for someone, such as a responsible neighbor or a professional pet sitter, to take them for bathroom breaks every two to four hours.

Alternatively, train them to eliminate in a specific place indoors on a pee pad. Be aware, however, that doing this can prolong the process of housetraining. Teaching your puppy to eliminate on newspaper may create a life-long surface preference, meaning that even as an adult they may eliminate on any newspaper lying around the living room, or even on rugs or blankets. If at all possible, it is better to make sure your schedule allows frequent outdoor breaks instead.



HOW TO HOUSETRAIN YOUR PUPPY OR DOG

Information provided by The Humane Society of the U.S. and Orange County Animal Services, NC.



Housetraining your dog or puppy requires patience, commitment, and lots of consistency. Accidents are part of the process, but if you follow these basic house-training guidelines, you can get the newest member of your family on the right track in a few weeks' time.

Establish a routine

Like babies, puppies and dogs do best on a regular schedule. The schedule teaches them that there are times to eat, times to play and times to do their business. Generally speaking, a puppy can control their bladder one hour for every month of age. So if your puppy is two months old, they can hold it for about two hours. Don't go longer than this between bathroom breaks or they're guaranteed to have an accident. While accidents will happen, it's best to avoid them when possible so the puppy or dog doesn't become used to them and consider them part of their accepted routine.

Take your dog or puppy outside frequently—at least every two hours—and immediately after they wake up, during and after playing, and after eating or drinking.

Pick a bathroom spot outside, and always take your puppy (on a leash) to that spot. While your puppy is relieving themselves, use a specific word or phrase that you can eventually use before they go to remind them what to do. Take them out for a longer walk or some playtime only after they have eliminated.

Reward your dog or puppy every time they eliminate outdoors. Praise or give treats—but remember to do so immediately after they've finished, not after they come back inside. This step is vital, because rewarding your dog for going outdoors is the only way to teach what's expected of them. Before rewarding, be sure they're finished. Puppies are easily distracted and if you praise too soon, they may forget to finish until they're back in the house.

Put your dog or puppy on a regular feeding schedule. Depending on their age, puppies usually need to be fed three or four times a day. Dogs usually need to be fed twice per day. Feeding your puppy or dog at the same times each day will make it more likely that they'll eliminate at consistent times as well, making housetraining easier for both of you.

Pick up your dog or puppy's water dish about two and a half hours before bedtime to reduce the likelihood that they'll need to relieve themselves during the night. Most dog and puppies can sleep for approximately seven hours without needing a bathroom break. If your dog or puppy does wake you up in the night, don't make a big deal of it; otherwise they will think it is time to play and won't want to go back to sleep. Turn on as few lights as possible and don't talk to or play with your dog or puppy. Instead, take them out and then return them to bed.

Supervise your dog or puppy

Don't give your dog or puppy an opportunity to soil in the house; keep an eye on them whenever they're indoors. Tether your puppy to you or a nearby piece of furniture with a six-foot leash if you are not actively training or playing. Watch for signs that your puppy needs to go out. Some signs are obvious, such as barking or scratching at the door, squatting, restlessness, sniffing around or circling. When you see these signs, immediately grab the leash and take them outside to their bathroom spot. If they eliminate, praise them and reward with a treat.

Keep your puppy on leash in the yard. During the housetraining process, your yard should be treated like any other room in your house. Give your puppy some freedom in the house and yard only after they become reliably housetrained.

When you can't supervise, confine

When you're unable to watch your puppy at all times, restrict them to an area small enough that they won't want to eliminate there. The space should be just big enough to comfortably stand, lie down and turn around. You can use a portion of a bathroom, a laundry room blocked off with baby gates, or a crate.

Be sure to learn how to use a crate humanely as a method of confinement and only leave them in this space as long as they can comfortably keep from going to the bathroom. This confinement time will depend on what stage of house training you are in and the age of your pet. (i.e. young puppies are often only able to refrain from using the bathroom for a few hours, but older dogs that are fully house-trained may be able to wait up to eight hours) If your dog or puppy has spent several hours in confinement, you'll need to take them directly to their bathroom spot as soon as you return.

