

Housetraining your Puppy

Understanding what basic principles apply and why things work will reduce frustration and increase success. Dogs are born with the instinct to keep their 'den' clean, which is why a crate works so well for house training. The #1 tool for house training is a crate, portable kennel, or puppy carrier. Consider the crate a 'management tool,' not a lifetime sentence. Once your dog proves that he will not destroy furniture or potty in the house when you are asleep or gone, you no longer need the crate. This may take 1-2 years, some dogs will always need to be crated, and some are lost without their crate.

We prefer plastic crates as they are more durable and dogs are less likely to escape. Some people may choose to use papers, pads, or a litter box. This works well for people who live in a high rise, or have dogs with allergies. Starting with puppy pads then trying to teach your pup to soil outside creates an unnecessary step and will delay housetraining.

1. **Be realistic** about the length of time your dog can control his bowel or bladder. Base this expectation on age and physical ability. A younger dog cannot control his bodily functions for the same amount of time as a more mature dog. A reasonable amount of time can be calculated by adding one hour to your pup's age in months (i.e., a healthy 2-month old should be able hold it for 3 hours etc.). Expecting more is not fair.
2. **A sick dog** may have accidents unwillingly. Rule out worms or a bladder infection. A visit to the vet is always recommended.
3. **Define their bed** or den. We recommend a crate to mimic our dog's instinct to den. The average puppy/dog that is mentally and physically sound will not soil in their bed as long as they have opportunity to do it outside. Some people think using a crate is horrible, but in reality, the crate becomes their own personal space within your home where they feel safe.
4. **Supervision**. Supervise your puppy until he understands the rules. It is our job as the pack leader to teach our puppy/dog these rules. Eliminate or minimize the opportunity for your dog to soil in your house. In my house, a puppy is either in the crate, leashed to me, outside (supervised), or having supervised playtime.
5. A puppy's world is **relative to his size**. If a puppy's crate is too big, he may soil in it. A puppy should just be able to stand up and turn around in their crate. If you selected a large breed, you will have to buy or borrow many sizes as they grow.

Place the crate in a social location, because they like to be where the action is. The kitchen works well and 'accidents' are easy to clean up. Move the crate into rooms where you hang out to make your puppy feel like part of the family. At night, if your puppy does not fuss in the crate, it is okay to move the crate to a bedroom, but leaving him in the kitchen will teach him how to be alone.

Crate rules:

Do not place the crate in direct sun

No bedding - towels encourage urinating, your puppy may eat the bedding

Remove any collars or fit the collar properly so it can't catch on anything

No water bottle - this sabotages your efforts

Toys should be indestructible (Kongs are great)

Do not allow children to poke at or stare at the puppy in the crate

NEVER use the crate as punishment or to isolate them

If you control what goes in (food and water), you can control what comes out!

Introducing the crate: your puppy should be hungry, his bladder should be empty, use tiny, soft treats (½ of a Pounce cat treat). Choose a command like 'go to crate' or 'kennel.' Put a toy and 1-2 treats in the back of the crate. Sit on the floor next to the crate with the door open, and play with your puppy. Take a treat or a squeaky toy to lure your puppy near the crate. When puppy is near the crate, praise and offer a treat. Take a second treat, lure him near the crate again, and toss the treat in the crate. A hungry puppy will go into the crate after the treat.

When your puppy enters the crate, say 'your kenneling command,' and close the door. Make this a quiet, calm exercise. Allow him to stay in the crate for 2 minutes. Gently say 'good boy' if he remains calm. If he fusses, sharply say 'no' and turn away. Do not reward bad behavior by letting him out. After 2 minutes, you can let your puppy out, but ONLY when he is quiet. Repeat the exercise. If you always associate the crate with food, your dog will LOVE the crate.

A schedule will speed up housetraining, because dogs are easily pattern trained. Create a chart and assign duties for family members. The following schedule is for a 2-month-old puppy. As puppies grow, free time increases and crate time decreases.

Morning: Take puppy from crate to potty spot. Feed, water puppy. Take pup to potty spot. After puppy has eliminated, enjoy your pup. After playtime/walk, allow to potty, return him to the crate.

Mid morning: Take puppy from crate to potty spot, offer water, play or walk. Return to crate.

Afternoon: Take puppy from crate to potty spot. Feed/water puppy. Take pup to potty spot. After puppy has eliminated, enjoy your pup. Return him to the crate.

Mid afternoon: Take puppy from crate to potty spot, offer water, play or walk, Return to crate.

Dinnertime: Take puppy from crate to potty spot. Feed and water puppy then take puppy out to potty spot. After puppy has eliminated, enjoy puppy playtime. After playtime or a walk, allow to potty, return him to the crate.

Bedtime: Take pup out to potty before bed.

Middle of the night: If he whines in the middle of the night, take him outside. No playtime and keep your energy low.

Create a potty spot and learn your pup's potty signals. Some dogs have a distinctive whine or bark, some dog stare at the door. Most pups sniff and circle before they poop. If you see any these behaviors inside, pick them up and race to the potty spot. I recommend using a leash to keep them there until they eliminate.

When your pup has an accident inside, rubbing your dog's nose in it or making him sit by the mess does **not** teach them anything. The **ONLY** time you can correct for an accident is if you catch him **in the act**. If you catch your pup eliminating inside, startle him with a loud "NO" then quickly and calmly pick him up and take him to the potty spot.

Rules:

1. Be consistent with the **CRATE to OUTSIDE** routine.
2. Teach a potty command like 'go potty' or 'hurry up.'
3. Use praise and/or a treat after he goes potty where you want.
4. Only allow off kitchen time when you know your pup has eliminated.
5. Your pet earns more freedom as he develops bladder control.
6. Puppies will always have accidents, and it is always the owner's fault. Supervision reduces accidents. If you can't supervise, put him in the crate.