



Housetraining Tips for Puppies

Housetraining is an important skill for puppies to learn. The following tips will set you and your puppy up for housetraining success.

- Know when your puppy needs to go out and set a schedule. Puppies will need to go out upon waking up, after eating or drinking, and after (or while) playing. You should also take your puppy out any time he shows potty signals, such as sniffing, circling, or wandering off. Eventually your puppy may start to go to the door or otherwise get your attention when he needs to go out, but until he does, you need to watch closely for his signals.
- What goes in must come out! Feeding on a schedule will help you predict when your puppy needs to go outside. Follow your veterinarian's advice regarding your puppy's feeding schedule. Water can be picked up an hour or so before bed, but should be available freely throughout the day to keep your puppy hydrated. Most puppies under 4 months of age will need to go outside within 30 minutes of eating; however, every puppy is unique. The key is figuring out *your* puppy's schedule.
- Supervise your puppy closely. When in the house, he should be no more than 6 feet away from you unless safely confined in a crate or other safe area. In addition to keeping him out of trouble, you will be able to prevent or interrupt accidents. Housetraining accidents can be frustrating, so consistent supervision to prevent them will make things easier for everyone!
- If you can't supervise, confine your puppy in a crate or in a safe area where it is ok if they potty. (See our tip sheet on Crate Training.) Until 14 weeks of age, puppies don't have full control of their bodily functions, but they do try to keep their "nest" area clean. This means that using a crate will help with housetraining from a very early age. Immediately after your puppy goes out and does his business he can be given more freedom in the house, but still must be supervised to stay out of trouble.
- When your puppy goes to the bathroom outside, use verbal praise to reinforce his behavior. For example, you can say "good boy" or "good potty." A treat may also help! Be sure to reward your puppy as soon as he finishes.
- If you catch him having an accident, interrupt your puppy by getting his attention with a clap or "aah" and then take him outside. If he finishes his business outside, praise him.
- If your puppy has an accident, do **not** yell at or smack him, and **never** rub his nose in his mess – none of those punishments mean anything to a puppy after the fact and can cause behavior problems later on. For example, harsh punishments can cause puppies to avoid going potty in front of you, making it harder to clean up mistakes and harder to reward him for going potty outside.
- Be sure to clean up accidents with a stain remover specifically for pets. These products will fully eliminate any traces of odor that your puppy's sensitive nose may detect.

Understanding how long puppies can "hold it" when confined will aid you in housetraining. Below are some guidelines:

- Before 16 weeks of age, puppies can usually wait their age in months between potty breaks when crated (i.e. an 8-week-old puppy can hold it for up to 2 hours and a 3-month-old puppy can hold it for 3 hours). With young puppies, you *will* need to get up in the middle of the night to take them out.
- Over 4 months of age, puppies can usually wait their age in months plus one, up to 8 hours (i.e. a 4 month old puppy can be crated for 4 to 5 hours and a 6 month old up to 7 hours). At this age many puppies will begin to sleep through the night, though each puppy is different and may need more time before this happens, so be patient.