



HOUSTRAINING 101

by

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The thing to remember is that the process of houstraining won't last forever! Someday in the not too distant future, your dog will be perfectly houstrained and accidents will be a thing of the past! But to get there, you'll need to be vigilant during the training process. Here's how:



THE PRINCIPLES OF HOUSTRAINING

- 🐾 A good rule of thumb is that puppies need to eliminate with the same hourly frequency as they are months old, up until about 6 months. That means that a 2-month-old puppy needs to go out about every 2 hours. So anticipate when he'll need to go and get him outside. Though he'll last longer during the night, he may whine or bark to signal he needs a late night potty break.
- 🐾 The other prime times for puppies to need the potty are 15 minutes or so after eating, after a rambunctious session of play, and just after a nap. You might want to wake your puppy from his nap in order to anticipate his need to go.
- 🐾 One of your best friends during houstraining is the **leash**. While inside and not crated, have your pup tethered to you **at all times!** Don't give him the opportunity to make a mistake by allowing him to wander around on his own. Should you notice any of the behaviors that precede elimination, such as circling or sniffing, get him outside **fast!**
Note: The other lovely side-effect of this is that your dog becomes comfortable staying at your side; it's great for relationship-building.
- 🐾 Your other best friend is the **crate**. Your dog won't potty where he sleeps, so his crate should be large enough for him to stand and lie down comfortably but not so large that he can lie down at one end and potty at the other. You may want to buy one with a divider so that it can grow along with your pup. So, when you can't supervise your pup, crate him. Note that he'll have to gradually get used to being in the crate for longer and longer periods of time. A dog must be trained to stay in a crate; otherwise he may cry in protest.
- 🐾 Being a good puppy parent means being there for him. If it's necessary to be away for longer than his bladder can hold and you can't get a dog walker, set up a **long-term confinement area**. This is an enclosure that includes his crate for his bed and his dog potty, along with water and a stuffed Kong or chew toy. The best way to construct a **dog potty** is to select the surface for which you'd like him to develop a preference, such as grass or pavement. Place a roll of turf, a concrete tile or bricks in a litter box, and put this in his confinement area, away from his bed. Note: **Wee-wee pad** or **paper-training** only prolongs the process of houstraining and can cause problems in the future. Allowing him to potty inside the house

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some times but not others can be confusing for dogs. So, only use paper or wee-wee pads if absolutely necessary!

- 🐾 Some people don't mind if their small breed dogs go in the house on wee-wee pads. You can train your dog to use wee wee pads as well as the great outdoors. Remember to reward richly for pottying in both places. But be aware that many wee-wee pad or paper-trained dogs end up confusing newspapers and carpet for appropriate potty areas!
- 🐾 When he goes in the right place, throw a **puppy party!** As he eliminates, softly say "Good boy," and when he's finished, offer him his favorite treat and make a big fuss over him! That's his payment for doing the right thing. Eventually you can fade the rewards, but at the start, make sure you let him know how much you appreciate his good behavior!
- 🐾 **If an accident does happen, do not scold him!** This is absolutely essential! More likely than not, your dog will not learn not to go inside but rather that it's best to hide from you when he needs to go. It can also make him afraid to go in front of you altogether, even outside. If you catch him in the act, try to interrupt him, then get him outside. But, if it's after the fact, chalk that one up to poor supervision and move on. A lesson learned!
- 🐾 **The 3-5 Minute Rule:** As your pup gains bladder control, start requiring him to do his business within the first 3-5 minutes of going outside. If he doesn't, take him back inside, wait a half hour (or less if you see pre-potty behavior), and take him back out to try again. All too often, a puppy parent will keep the dog outside waiting for him to go and, as soon as he eliminates, take him back inside. What the dog learns from this is that he can prolong the walk by holding off pottying.
- 🐾 You can even introduce a command like "**Go potty**" by saying it when you see pre-pottying behavior. In time, your dog will be eliminating on command.

OTHER REASONS FOR HOUSE-SOILING

If your dog has been very reliable for a long time and is suddenly making mistakes, he might have a **medical problem** such as urolithiasis or giardia. Your vet can treat these with medication and dietary adjustment and most likely things will go back to normal. Sometimes, however, a dog can develop the bad habit of going inside even after the discomfort of the actual illness has been resolved. In this case, you might have to give him a housetraining refresher course.

In geriatric dogs, house-soiling might be a symptom of canine **cognitive dysfunction syndrome** (CDS). Keep an eye out for other indicators. A helpful acronym for remembering its symptoms is DISH: *Disorientation, Interaction changes with the family, Sleep/wake cycle changes, and House-soiling.* There are medications and special diets that can slow the progression of CDS, often called doggie Alzheimer's.

If your dog eliminates inside only when you're away or urinates when he receives attention, he might be either suffering from **separation anxiety** or **submissive urination**. These are problems that a trainer/behaviorist can help you to solve.

Just remember that dogs aren't spiteful. If your dog has an accident, it's most likely because he just doesn't know the drill yet. Patient, vigilant work on your part can get your dog accident-free!