



# Potty Training

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First, two important points:

1. The number one rule in housebreaking is this: Do not let your dog have an accident in the house without getting caught! If you don't catch him, you can't scold him. Therefore he doesn't learn that it's wrong and will do it again.
2. Do not use puppy pads or newspaper if you want your dog to potty outside. This will only confuse your dog, teaching him that going potty inside is okay under the right circumstances. There are no right circumstances. Outside only. (If your dog was pad trained by us, this section will still be very helpful for you. Just be sure to follow your individualized instructions from your lesson as well.)

Housebreaking is process that must be integrated with your daily life. Fortunately, it can be modified to work with almost any schedule. Contact us with specific questions. Some dogs are housebroken in days, but most dogs require months until they are fully trustworthy. And some dogs require a couple of years. Try not to feel overwhelmed. Just follow these steps and you will get through the process as quickly and efficiently as possible.

## **Completely Prevent Accidents – Pick One of these Options at Any Point Day or Night**

You can set things up in such a way that your dog couldn't possibly have an accident. At worst, if he does, you will see it and can make it a learning moment. You have 5 options:

1. Crate your dog (or keep him in a puppy pen or larger space if he's trustworthy).
2. Have your dog do a place command.
3. Keep your dog on leash and hook the leash to your belt loop (a carabiner clip works well).
4. Tethered to a stationary object but supervised 100%.
5. Loose in the house but supervised 100%.

No accidents occurring means your dog won't develop the bad habit of going potty in the house while you work to develop the good habit of going potty outside. If your dog already has the habit of going potty inside, eliminating accidents by choosing one of these four options at all times is what's going to snap him out of it and get him on track.

## **Have Your Dog on a Leash When He Goes Potty**

A leash keeps your dog from playing around and forgetting about his business. Otherwise your dog can goof around outside and will immediately potty in the house when he comes in and the excitement is over. It also keeps him in one spot, which is a great way to encourage him to keep his pee and poo in a particular area of the yard.

## **No Scolding after the Fact**

Dogs learn by associating events that happen at the same time. If you punish your dog and show him the mess you found, he will only learn that you finding it is what got him in trouble, not him putting it there. This will lead to him going potty in places like behind the couch and under the table in an effort to hide it. You have to catch him in the act in order to create the correct association.

## **What to Do When You Catch Him in the Act**

If you catch your dog in the act, this is a perfect time to teach him that potty in the house is bad. Clap your hands, stomp your feet and say “No!” Be sure to get a reaction. If he stares blankly at you or ignores you, amp it up. Use a sharper voice and make some noise. Get a reaction out of him. Then stop scolding and be calm.

Calmly clip on his leash and lead him outside. *Do not carry your dog.* He needs to learn to walk outside to potty. Stand in one spot with your dog on a leash, give him 3-5 minutes to finish and then return inside. If he doesn't finish, keep a close eye on him or put him in his crate. He may still have something left! You can try again in a little while. If he potties more, praise him calmly. Treats are not recommended. Too many dogs are in such a hurry to get their treat that they don't fully eliminate. Praise and cuddles are all you need.

## **Clean Up**

Pick up your puppy and put him in a crate in another room while you clean up any mess in the home. Do not let him see you. Mommy dogs clean up after their babies, so the puppies learn that this is acceptable. He should only see you clean outside, so he can learn that that is the acceptable location. Use a high quality enzymatic cleaner, such as Simple Green Bio Dog, for cleaning if your dog tends to return to the same spot(s). We find that Bio Dog is far more effective than Nature's Miracle, though you may have to order it online (you may find it at Home Depot). Be sure to keep the area damp for several hours. Enzymatic cleaners contain living harmless bacteria that eat organic material and can thoroughly clean up what we can't. They need to be moist and out of direct sunlight to live and do their thing, so be sure to leave the area a little damp for half a day or so if possible. Due to the live bacteria, you may need to be cautious with any household members with a depressed immune system. Also, do not allow any pets to walk on or lick the area until dry. Licking the cleaner from their feet can make them sick.

For an additional boost, especially to eliminate pheromones that are attracting your dog, you may want to follow-up with Nok-Out. This is a powerful odor remover that even kills the smell of cat urine. It works through evaporation, so when you remove excess moisture, allow the area to remain damp and dry on its own. Nok-Out can be purchased at [nokout.com](http://nokout.com). It's sometimes also available on Amazon, but beware of price gouging.

If your dog poops indoors, don't just throw it away. Move a small piece to the area of the backyard where you want him to go (or potty pad if you're using one). This may attract him and encourage him to potty there. However, do not create a huge pile of poo, as the area will then be “dirty” and he'll seek out a clean place to go. You can even dab your dog's pee on a paper towel and wipe it on the ground in his potty spot.

## **Why Use a Crate?**

A crate has many uses. It provides a place for you to leave your dog where he won't potty when you can't watch him. It can also help him develop a signal, like whining or pawing at the door when he needs to potty, since he'll want to get out of the crate. If he starts making a ruckus after being quiet for a while, take him out on the leash. Most importantly, it helps prevent your dog from having accidents in the house. If a bad habit never develops, then you don't have to break it.

An exercise pen or a small puppy-proofed room can replace the crate after several weeks, if you can trust your dog to have not an accident in that area. Gradually increase the size of his trusted space. Go back to a smaller space if he has accidents and try again later (3-7 or more days).

Be careful when letting your dog out of the crate to go potty because he's crying. If he doesn't potty, put him right back in, or he'll think crying gets him out to play. If he potties, praise him and give him some supervised free time as a reward. This will encourage him to continue signaling to go potty. A crate also becomes a comforting and safe place to sleep, as it appeals to a dog's natural den-oriented instincts. At night, covering the crate with a blanket may help your dog feel more secure and reduce crying. Plastic crates are better than the all-wire ones as the dog feels more secure. Playing music or talk radio will cut out auditory stimulation that triggers barking and whining.

If you travel, a crate is ideal for cars and airplanes. If your dog ever needs surgery and needs to be confined, keeping him in a crate won't add extra stress. Overnight stays at the vet and visits to the groomer will also be less stressful places if your dog is crate trained since he will be kept in a small cage during his stay.

A puppy or dog new to housebreaking may spend quite a lot of time in the crate. There really isn't a limit, as long as your dog receives frequent attention, exercise, and quality time with you. Also, make sure you're moving in a direction that will decrease his time in the crate in the future.

When choosing a crate, get one that is large enough for your dog to stand and lie down in comfortably. Too much space may invite him to potty in one corner and curl up in another. If your dog will grow much larger you can block off part of the crate with a piece of wood or a box. All-wire crates are not recommended. Many dogs bust out of them. Also, many owners end up having to cover them up completely to reduce stress. Plastic crates are a better choice. Petmate is a great brand. Don't get one that is too flimsy, making it easy to pry open the door.

### **Food and Water**

A fixed feeding schedule will help you know when your dog needs to potty. Puppies typically need to go within 20 minutes of eating, often immediately. An older dog may be able to hold it, but may not be inclined to, so watch him closely too. You can feed a puppy as young as 3 months twice a day. A dog only needs about 10 minutes to eat. Put away any leftovers so that your dog learns that he needs to eat when the food is available or he waits until the next meal.

Some dogs like to drink more than they need. You can regulate water intake if your dog drinks too much (resulting in more peeing than necessary) or if you need to confine your dog and having water always available leads to accidents. Just make sure your dog has access to water at least 4-5 times a day. Having water on schedule will also help in housebreaking particularly difficult dogs that need a stricter regimen.

Do not give your dog food, water or treats at least 3-4 hours before putting him to bed. Give him a potty break just before bed to make sure he has a chance to eliminate. This will help your dog not have accidents during the night.

Feeding your dog on a schedule has many other benefits. It teaches your dog that food comes from *you* and he will respect you for that. Also, decreased appetite is often one of the first, and possibly the only sign of illness. Notify your vet of any abrupt changes in appetite. If you travel, you can be sure that your dog eats when you make a pit stop. Free feeding is the leading cause of obesity in dogs since they often over eat. Monitor the quantity of your dog's food and you can have much more control over his weight and health.

Wet food increases urination and softens stool, increasing the frequency and urgency of pooping. It also promotes tooth decay. No dog or puppy needs to be on wet food unless advised by your vet.

## **Timing Potty Breaks**

Take your dog out as often as necessary. Each dog is different. Start with every hour or so and go from there. Too many accidents? Take him out more frequently. No accidents? Add another 30 minutes or an hour between potty breaks. Watch your dog and get to know his schedule. As he earns your trust, gradually increase the time between breaks so that you're working towards your goal.

There are three critical times that your dog will most likely have to go potty:

1. Right after waking up in the morning or from a nap.
2. Right after exercise or excitement.
3. Anywhere from 0-20 minutes after eating or drinking anything, including treats.

You may need to give your young puppy a break or two during the night. Also, if you have an adult dog that is not used to having to hold it all night you may need to give him a break the first few nights.

Immediately take your dog outside if you see him circling and sniffing. Also, take him out if he's been calm but suddenly becomes agitated or fussy.

## **How to Develop a Potty Signal**

People are often surprised that their puppy doesn't alert them to the fact that he has to go potty. Why should he? He really doesn't care where he potties at this point. He will naturally develop a signal on his own as he cares more about where he does his business. If you're crate training, then he'll start to paw at the crate door, whine or bark if he needs to go. If you're gradually increasing his time in the house, you may see him wander near the door and sniff, paw at the door half-heartedly, or push his nose into your leg. Immediately get your dog outside if you see what you think may be a cue. Praise your dog if he potties. If he doesn't potty after 3-5 minutes then put him back where he was (in the crate, tied to you, etc.) so that he doesn't think that pawing, barking or whining will earn him play time.

## **Teach Your Dog to Go Potty on Cue**

Some popular cues are "Go Potty," "Take a Break," and "Get Busy," but you can use any cue you'd like. Start by saying it while your dog is peeing or pooping, not beforehand. For several days or a week say it every time your dog is doing his thing, calmly, with no eye contact. Don't draw attention to yourself, just repeat the words so that your dog is hearing them in the background. Your dog will naturally develop an association between the cue and act of relieving himself. After a week or so, try saying the cue during a potty break and see if it stimulates an urge to go. Just keep at it and he'll figure it out.

This is a great tool to have! You can have your dog go potty quickly on rainy days, hot days, at pit stops during travel, or any other time you need to get things done.

## **Important Notes on Housebreaking**

Stick to this plan and you should have your puppy or dog housebroken as quickly, and with as few accidents, as possible.

Resist the temptation to sprinkle this method with advice from friends, family and other dog training literature. There is no one right way to housebreak a dog, but it's important to stick with a single method to maintain consistency. Contact us with questions or concerns before changing anything.

Housebreaking isn't a perfect process. It's typically 3 steps forward and 2 steps back. Don't be discouraged by regression. Retrace your steps to get your dog back on track. If you're not getting over a hump, call or e-mail us and we'll be happy to help you out.