

How do I house train my puppy?

House training is the first task owners set to accomplish. In order to accomplish this task, owners need to be consistent. Each time the pup has an accident inside the house, it is practicing bad habits. Constant supervision is a must.

Realistically, owners cannot supervise when they are at work or running errands. For these times it is important to confine the animal. Crates are often used for this purpose. So long as the dog learns to enjoy the crate and as long as they are not overused, it is not traumatic. (Further assistance on crate training is available in our how to section.)

Crates work for house training because most dogs will not soil in areas they sleep in. Notice it says “most” not “all.” If the crate is too large, some puppies will soil in one corner and sleep in another. Make sure you have the appropriate size of crate. Your dog should be comfortable, but excess room will inhibit house training.

Other dogs may have learned to tolerate dirty conditions. Trainers often call these animals “dirty dogs.” This problem can develop when puppies have been forced to go where they sleep because no other option was provided.

When that happens, owners have to take on the responsibility of supervising 100% of the time. It’s not impossible to house train a “dirty dog.” It will take a bit more work. Owners may have to ask friends and family to stop by the house more often to let the puppy out *before* it has an accident.

I am personally not a fan of paper or pad training. It may work for some dogs, but most dogs struggle with the mixed messages pads send. Dogs are essentially learning, “it is okay to go in the house.” When the pads are removed, owners are left with a dog that is going throughout the house. Better to bite the bullet and do house training from day one.

So how does one house train a dog? Use these few easy steps.

1. **Create a schedule.** There can be some flexibility. But for the most part, plan regular meals, play, walks and sleeping times. Most puppies go after they eat, exercise, drink or wake up. This allows you to better predict when the puppy will need to go.
2. **Keep expectations reasonable.** Use the following chart to determine reasonable expectations. There can be significant variation between dogs. Toy breeds need to get outside more often. They have small bladders. If your dog has been eating, playing or drinking, they also will need to go outside sooner rather than later. Some dogs may be able to sleep through the night earlier than others. Do remember that most dogs get full bowel and bladder control around 16 weeks of age. Before that time, they need to go as soon as the urge arises.

Age In Months	Approximate Time In Hours
2	3
3	4
4	5
5	6

3. **No free feeding of food and monitor water intake.** Let your puppy eat its meals. Remove leftover food once they are finished. Dogs that snack throughout the day have to go outside more often. That can lead to periodic accidents. I do not believe in restricting water. However, do pay attention to your dog's drinking habits. Chugging water means the dog will need to go several times in the next few hours. In colder climates, eating snow means the same thing.
4. **Do not let your puppy wander off.** Your puppy is much like a young toddler. Active supervision is a must. This way you know the puppy is safe. But it also allows you to spot signs it needs to go outside. Pay attention to sniffing, circling and wandering off. Many dogs have accidents in out of the way corners of the house. If your puppy starts to walk off, take them outside.
5. **Take your dog outside on a leash.** Do not let your dog outside to wander and play unsupervised. No matter how bad the weather gets - you need to go with them. Give them time to go. If your dog does not go in a reasonable amount of time, then take them back inside the house. But it is important to keep them beside you – on a leash if need be. If your puppy did not go outside and should have – it's an accident waiting to happen. Take them back outside in another 10 -15 minutes or if you see signs that they need to go.
6. **Reward generously.** When your puppy goes outside, reward it generously with a small, but very special treat. Give the treat as soon as your puppy finishes going – not when you return into the house. Timing is very important. This teaches the dog that going outside is the right thing to do. It also motivates it to go outside in the future. If it wants to earn the special treat, it needs to make the effort to go outside. It will take time for your puppy to learn this. But they will.
7. **Give a second reward of freedom.** If you are in a secure area like a fenced yard, you can give some free supervised play after your puppy goes to the bathroom. This teaches the dog to go first – play second. If you are out on a walk, do not return immediately home after your dog goes to the bathroom. Some dogs learn to hold their bladders to make the walk last longer.
8. **Do not scold or discipline accidents.** Most owners want to point out the dog's mistake because they want the dog to learn. That can backfire. Some dogs instead learn, "People do not like seeing you pee." When they make that association, they start doing their business behind the owner's back. Others may even refuse to go when on a leash next to their owner. If you do catch your puppy having an accident, quickly and calmly take them outside. But do not scold or punish them.
9. **Watch for brilliance.** Keep a close eye for signs that your puppy is asking to go outside. They may stand quietly by the door. If you don't notice, they will have an accident. Make sure your dog's leash is always by the door, as well as a supply of treats. The day your dog asks to go outside is a big day. Be prepared!

10. **Gradually have your dog hold it for longer periods of times.** As your dog's body matures, gradually have them hold it for longer and longer periods of time. The amount of time will vary based on the individual dog.

What if my dog is still having accidents?

If you are 100% consistent and your dog is struggling, then it is important to address diet and medical factors that may be coming into play.

Make sure your dog's bowels are regular. If your dog's diet is leading to inconsistent bowel movements, then consider adjusting your dog's diet. (Remember that dogs need gradual food changes.)

Urinary tract infections, urinary crystals, inverted vulvas and spay incontinence can also lead to problems. Common signs that a dog is ill may include frequency (dog goes too often), urgency (dog cannot hold it), having accidents and seeming not aware of it. Speak to your puppy's veterinarian to have these medical conditions ruled out.