

Puppy housetraining guide

Choose the desired location and teach the puppy where to go

1. Ensure that the outdoor location is practical and easy to access.
2. Go out with your puppy every time and immediately praise and give intermittent food rewards for elimination in the desired area.
3. During initial training, take the puppy out to eliminate each hour during the daytime when home to supervise. If it does not eliminate within 5 minutes, return indoors, supervise closely for 15–30 minutes and try again.
4. Take the pet out when it is most likely to need to eliminate:
 - Following play, exercise, naps, and being released from confinement.
 - After eating and drinking. Supervise closely after feeding and take the puppy out to eliminate within 15–30 minutes.
 - Prior to confinement or bedtime.
5. Consider teaching your puppy to “go” on command by saying a command word, such as “hurry up,” in a positive tone as it squats to eliminate.

Maintain a consistent schedule

1. Offer food two to three times each day at the same time to help establish an elimination routine.
2. Only leave the food down for 20 minutes or until your puppy walks away. Be sure to discuss with your veterinarian how to assess your puppy’s body condition score so that food quantity can be adjusted according to your pet’s needs.
3. Consider taking up the water bowl 1–2 hours prior to bedtime.

Prevent mistakes

1. Until the puppy has completed 4 consecutive weeks without soiling in the home, it should be within eyesight of a family member or confined to a safe puppy-proofed area.
2. Use a crate, pen, or room for confinement whenever it cannot be directly supervised. The confinement area is intended to serve as a safe, comfortable bed, playpen, or den for the puppy. The puppy should not be confined until after it has eliminated and had sufficient exercise and social interaction (i.e., when it is due for a sleep, nap, or rest) and should not be confined for any longer than it can control elimination, unless paper, potty pad, or litterbox-training techniques are being used.
3. Most puppies can control elimination through the night by 3–4 months of age. Owners must be aware of their puppy’s limits. During the daytime, puppies up to 4 months usually have a few hours of control, while puppies 5 months and over may be able to last longer.
4. If the puppy eliminates in its cage, it may have been left there longer than it can be confined or the crate may be large enough that it sleeps in one end and has room to eliminate in the other; in this case a divider might be used temporarily. Also, if the puppy is anxious about being confined or left alone, it is unlikely to keep the crate clean.
5. Leave a leash attached during supervision to interrupt any attempts to eliminate indoors, and direct the puppy outdoors. By observing the puppy closely for pre-elimination signs, the puppy can be trained to eliminate outdoors without the need for punishment and may soon learn to signal when it has to eliminate.

Handling mistakes

1. Punishment should not be used. The goal is to interrupt your puppy if it is caught in the act of eliminating indoors, and direct it to the appropriate location so that it can be rewarded when it eliminates there.
2. If you catch your puppy in the act of eliminating indoors, call the puppy to come and if it does not immediately cease say “no,” clap your hands, or pull on the leash to interrupt the behavior. Then take the pet outside and immediately reward upon completion.
3. If urine or stool is found on the floor after the puppy has eliminated, do not consider any form of correction since the puppy will not associate the correction with the elimination. You can prevent soiling in the home by closing doors or moving furniture to prevent access to the location, booby trapping the location with a repellent or motion detector, constant supervision of your puppy, and by consistently rewarding elimination outdoors.

Odor elimination

Clean up any odors from indoor elimination. Be certain to use enough product to get to the source of the odor. Use one of the products that have been specifically designed to eliminate pet urine odors (chemical modification, enzymes, bacterial odor removal).

Paper or potty pad training

1. While it is best to avoid indoor training techniques if the goal is to teach the pet to eliminate outdoors, this approach is sometimes necessary for apartment dwellers or when it is not practical to take the puppy outside frequently enough. For paper or potty training, the puppy can be confined to a room or pen with paper covering the floor opposite to its bedding, water bowl, and toys when it cannot be supervised.
2. Paper training can be combined with outdoor training so that the puppy learns that there are two appropriate places to eliminate. The puppy can be placed in its crate (which can be placed inside the pen) for short-term confinement and placed in the full pen or room with paper for longer departures.
3. Another option is to train the pup to eliminate indoors using a litterbox. Use the same techniques as for outdoor housetraining except that, instead of taking the puppy outdoors, it should be taken by leash to its litterbox and reinforced with praise and treats for litter use. If the litter is not used within 5 minutes, supervise the dog closely with a leash and take it back to the litter every 15 minutes until it is used.

Allowing time outdoors (in environments where appropriate)

Another option for some households is to allow the dog to spend time outdoors in a pen or run where it can eliminate. When indoors, close supervision is still required to prevent indoor elimination. Accompanying the dog outdoors and reinforcing outdoor elimination should also be incorporated into the training regimen.