

Congratulations on your new puppy or adult dog!

It's crucial to acquire the information and training skills necessary to successfully housetrain (potty train to go outdoors) your puppy using positive reinforcement. Let's dispel some housetraining myths before getting started.



Myth #1: Rub the puppy's nose in his potty accident and scold him loudly.

🐾 **False:** Unfortunately, your parents' old housetraining technique not only doesn't work, but is detrimental to your relationship with your puppy. If the deed's been done your puppy will have no idea why you're scolding him or rubbing his nose in his puddle.

Your puppy's "guilty" body language is actually what's called a "calming" or "appeasement" gesture. When your puppy tucks its ears back, looks away and skulks, he's sensing that you're angry at him and hoping to calm you down. Your puppy's main survival method involves being apt at reading the body language of both dogs and humans, so if you're feeling angry, it's apparent. In addition, when you call your dog to you to punish him for peeing in the house it makes future "recall" training extremely difficult.

🐾 **Alternate Strategy:** If you do catch him in the act, clap your hands loudly instantly and say "Outside potty" in an excited (not angry) voice. Scoop him up and say, "Outside potty," all the way to the yard, place him on the grass and let him finish. As he squats to pee calmly say, "Good potty" (or whatever word you choose to set as his elimination cue).

Myth #2: Putting a dog in a crate seems cruel.

🐾 **False:** The manner in which you introduce your puppy to his crate is how he'll perceive it. If your puppy or adult dog is crated as punishment he'll see it as such.

How to House Train Your Dog

Now let's get started! First, write out a schedule for your puppy's day and weekend routine. Next, purchase a crate only large enough for your puppy (or adult dog) to turn around, stretch out and lie down in. If he has too much room, he may go to a corner of the crate to eliminate. It's important to have a wire crate for good ventilation. [Precision](#) crates are highly recommended and they have an adjustable back wall for your growing puppy.

Sample Schedule:

🐾 Morning – Two very important potty runs!

Quietly take your puppy out of his sleeping area and outdoors (keep emotions low-key). Quietly say, “Go potty.” At this stage you're naming the behavior; it's not a command yet because your puppy doesn't understand the correlation between the words and the act. When he squats calmly say, “Good potty.” Bring your puppy in and feed him breakfast in his crate (preferably from a stuffed Kong). After he's finished eating take him out again.

🐾 Late Morning – Now it's play or training time!

If your schedule allows it have play or training time, otherwise put your puppy back in his crate. A crate alternative is a gated, hard-surface floored room with a small fake (or real!) grass lawn “potty station” in one corner. Pre-treat the potty station by rubbing “pre-scented” grass that your puppy's previously urinated upon onto the potty station grass.

🐾 Mid-Day – Gone during the day? Keep your puppy in his crate or gated area

A puppy 8-12 weeks old needs to eliminate every four hours when left alone. Consider hiring a dog walker to come twice a day at this early stage to let your puppy out and to possibly spend some time training him. To find a good dog walker consult with your [veterinarian](#) or pet parent friends for their recommended pet sitters.

When you get home to take your puppy out to eliminate keep it uneventful. Remember to be “emotionally neutral” for these potty runs, otherwise your puppy might expect a play session when you go outside together. Quietly open the crate. If he is overly exuberant, approach the crate backwards without making eye contact and open the crate door.

If you're at home with your dog during the day he'll be more stimulated and so will need more frequent potty breaks. Even if he doesn't have to go, take him out repeatedly, this method will speed up the housetraining process. Always interact with your puppy after bringing him in. Play, train or give him a treat. This teaches him to eliminate quickly so he can get inside for the treat, thereby shortening the time it takes to get him to go potty.

🐾 Evening – Have lots of fun and brief training sessions that end with success

When your pup's out of his crate for play time keep close surveillance. Keep your puppy leashed to your belt with a six foot leash so he can't wander off. Or place him in a large play pen close enough to you to keep an eye on him.

Key Things to Remember:

- 🐾 If your puppy eliminates more than a few times in his crate when alone, shorten the amount of time between potty breaks. Otherwise, housetraining will take longer.
- 🐾 Teach, don't punish. Punishment has no place in housetraining. Your puppy will become afraid of you if you rub her nose in it or swat her. She'll learn to eliminate when you're not looking.
- 🐾 If your puppy is sniffing, circling or squatting, immediately clap your hands to startle him and momentarily stop the urination. Whisk him outside while saying "Outside potty." Your puppy's name should not be used as punishment (yelled at him) or he won't come to you when called later on. Leave his name completely out of his housetraining program.
- 🐾 Expect a few accidents, but remember that the more there are the longer the housetraining program will take. Your puppy relies on you to be a fair, consistent leader, which includes patiently teaching her where and when to eliminate.
- 🐾 Your puppy needs access to fresh water 24 hours a day. At night, you can give him a smaller amount than you have available for him during the day. Completely withholding water at night can cause him physical problems.

Note: Training handouts are written by i Love Dogs' consulting trainer, [Eugenia Vogel](#), who has more than 20 years experience as a professional dog trainer and behavior consultant as "Canine Coach." For more questions about canine behavior, visit i Love Dogs' [Ask-A-Trainer](#) section on [iLoveDogs.com](#)!

Photo Source: "Name Our Puppy" by [Chad Miller](#) via flickr.com ([creative commons license](#))