



## **Tips to Help You House-Train Your Puppy**

House-training a puppy isn't rocket-science but it does require a plan. That plan should include *preparation, consistency, and a commitment of time*. And patience...

### **1. Be Prepared**

Your puppy will probably be eight-weeks old when you bring him (or her) home, and you'll want to be prepared for that arrival well ahead of time. You'll need:

- The proper size crate for your puppy to sleep in and to stay in when you can't keep an eye on her wanderings in the house
- A collar and leash
- A pocket-size flashlight to keep by the door
- Machine-washable dog bedding
- Dry-to-the-touch absorbent puppy pads
- Water and food bowls
- A soft toy for your puppy to sleep with while he gets used to being away from his litter-mates
- Dog food and small age-appropriate dog training treats
- An enzyme-based odor-remover cleaning product
- An appointment scheduled with your local veterinarian

Most dog experts say to plan on a house-training period of four to six months for your dog to be *completely* house-trained\*. But, every dog is unique and some will get the hang of it *much* more quickly. However long it takes, be patient and be consistent. The many years of joy you will get from having a dog in your life make the investment of time now well worth it. And keep in mind, once your dog is completely house-trained, the whole routine becomes a lot easier.

*\*"Completely house trained" is defined by most experts as four consecutive weeks without any "accidents" in the house.*

## **2. Establish a consistent time and place**

As soon as you arrive home with your new puppy, clip the leash on its collar and carry him or her to the outdoor spot that you've chosen as the regular place for the puppy to relieve itself. Always go to the same spot so make sure it's a convenient one for that 11:00 p.m. or 5:00 a.m. trip outside in the dark. The consistency of place is an important part of house-training your dog.

Young puppies need to urinate about every two hours while they are awake. (Once your puppy is sound asleep for the night, you can enjoy a longer stretch of time before you need to take him outside.) As puppies get older and develop bladder-control, they can go for longer and longer periods between trips outside to relieve themselves, but while you are housetraining, be prepared to take your dog out every couple of hours. Do NOT wait until you see your dog start to pee. Your goal is to prevent your puppy from peeing in the house.

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You also need to take your puppy outside immediately after his or her meals; that will change as your dog learns to tell you she needs to go out. So, while house-training, even if you and the dog were outside an hour before his meal, you still need to take him outside again immediately after he finishes eating. Be sure to make the puppy's last meal of the day as early in the evening as possible, and *not* shortly before bedtime.

If you will not be home with your puppy during the day, someone else needs to be so that the dog can be taken outside at consistent intervals. Whatever your schedule may be, plan on taking your dog outside as early as possible each morning, and as late as possible each night before putting your puppy in its sleeping crate in a dark, quiet place (preferably your bedroom) so that you reduce the number of hours the dog's bladder goes unemptied.

### **3. Give a consistent reward**

Keep a bowl of small, age-appropriate dry "training mini-treats" by the door so that you can grab one as you clip the leash on your puppy and head out for puppy pee-time (you'll find a variety of mini-treats in the dogfood section of your grocery store, or online). Take your puppy to the designated spot and as soon as she is done, say *good dog* (or *good girl* or *good boy*) with enthusiasm and give her the small treat. Every time.

### **4. Do not punish your puppy if there is an accident**

If your puppy starts to pee in the house before you can scoop him up and get him outside, do not punish him! He is too young to control his bladder and is still learning his new

routine. Just get him outside to the designated spot as quickly as possible; when he's done, praise him and give him the little treat.

Then, as soon as you get back inside, put your puppy in its crate with a soft toy; while he's confined, thoroughly clean the area where he had the accident. Use an enzyme-based odor-remover cleaning product (there are many to choose from in pet stores and online). It's important to completely remove the scent of the urine or your puppy will think that he can pee there again. *Do not try to cover the odor with a scented spray*; the urine smell will still be evident to a dog—their sense of smell is thousands of times better than ours. Always use an enzyme-based cleaner. These products don't mask the odor—they actually eliminate the molecules that cause the odor. Once the area is completely cleaned and dry, you can let your puppy out of the crate.

## **5. Keep an eye on your puppy**

Until your puppy is completely house-trained and has not had any accidents in the house for at least four weeks in a row, you or someone else in your household needs to be able to see the puppy at all times. Ideally, you will have installed temporary puppy gates so that you can ensure the puppy is in the same room with you and cannot wander out of sight. This step is important so that you can be alerted to the signs that the puppy needs to go outside. Keeping a watchful eye means you can avoid having to clean up an accident, and also that your young dog's house-training will be accomplished sooner.

By the way, if you roll up and temporarily store your area rugs before bringing home your new puppy, you can avoid having to clean an “accident” that happened on a rug

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rather than on a hard surface. Cleaning a puddle of puppy pee from a wooden or vinyl floor is much easier than getting it out of a carpet. And rooms with wall-to-wall carpeting should be off-limits until your puppy is completely house-trained.

## **6. Be patient**

Dogs are smart, they love to learn, and they love to please us. Give your puppy lots of love and a consistent schedule, and you'll soon be rewarded with a house-trained dog.

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*I hope you find these tips helpful, but please don't consider them all there is to know about house-training a puppy. I highly recommend that you visit your local library or bookstore for a copy of *The Art of Raising a Puppy*, by the Monks of New Skete, or one of the many other good books available on this topic.*



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*Martha*

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