



Housetraining Your Puppy



Teach your pup the RIGHT place to "go"

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Housetraining is the process of teaching a puppy where to go to the bathroom. Puppies have a natural instinct to not soil their bed or den, and one of the things you will be teaching your pup is to consider your entire house to be a "den".

At the same time, puppies are developing their control over their bodies. When they are very young, they often have very little awareness of their needs and very little control, so they literally must mature some before they can learn to "hold it" and get to the right place.

If they're not sure what's "den" and what's "toilet", and they have little control over their bladder and bowels, how do you teach them? The secret is establish a history of going to the bathroom in the right place and getting rewarded for it, and at the same time preventing any "accidents" from happening.

It's important to know when your puppy will have to go to the bathroom. Puppies also usually must use the bathroom:

- right after waking up
- after a few moments of excited play
- after eating
- after drinking
- a few hours after the last time. As a general rule of thumb, a puppy can go one hour for month-of-age plus one. In other words, a two-month-old puppy can hold his bladder and bowels for 3 hours, a three-month-old for 4 hours, a five-month-old for 6 hours. *Many puppies cannot be fully housebroken before they are 6 months old. By that age, they can "hold it" for up to 7 hours.*

So here's the secret: Always keep your puppy in an area where it's OK for him to "go". Never leave him where he's not allowed to go. This way he can *never* make a mistake.

In the real world, that means that the puppy stays in your kitchen (or other parts of the house without carpeting) with newspapers all over the floor. Use doors or baby gates to keep your puppy off of carpeted areas.

You can keep him confined in a crate, pen or other sort of "bed" area where his instincts will keep him from peeing. But remember they can only "hold it" a certain amount of time (see the rule of thumb above), so be sure to let him out frequently to go to the bathroom. (For a guide to crate training, click [here](#).)

As often as you can - every half-hour is best for a young puppy, at least every hour - take him outside to the area where you want him to go. Take him on leash if you need to. Wait patiently 10-15 minutes out there; be calm and uninteresting so the puppy becomes more interested in sniffing than in playing with you. If the puppy goes to the bathroom, praise him, and maybe even give him a small tasty treat. **Now** you can play with him gleefully (if time allows), and then let him join the rest of the family "pack" on the carpets for some further playtime or exploring until the next potty time.

If he doesn't go to the bathroom in the right place, take him back to his crate or bed area or to the newspaper-covered "safe" area, and try again in another 30-60 minutes.

This way you can establish a history of the puppy going to the bathroom in the right place and getting rewarded, while avoiding the possibility of his making a mistake and going in the wrong place. The puppy will learn that it's really worth his while to pee outside, and that inside, on the carpets, is the place for fun and games, and he can only access it if he's "empty". (See also "[House-proofing Your Puppy](#)").

Immediately after your puppy has peed and pooped, you can usually consider him "empty" and therefore "safe" to leave on your carpet - until you encounter one of the conditions listed above. If your puppy has not yet emptied his bladder somewhere, **do not leave him unsupervised on your carpet!** Only leave him in a crate or bed where his natural instincts not to soil his bed will make him hold it, or some place where it's OK if he goes (like on a newspaper-covered floor or outside), or you must be watching him closely. "Watching him closely" means he doesn't have a chance to go when you're not looking.

What if he makes a mistake? If you follow these rules, you won't discover a nasty wet spot or a smelly surprise. You'll catch him in the act. If you see him sniffing or squatting, try to interrupt (not scold) him by saying "Ah, ah!". Pick him up (if possible!) and immediately take him outside. Put him down, and watch him. As soon as he goes outside, praise him. **Never** scold or punish your pup for going to the bathroom in the wrong place. He won't get it. They don't understand pointing, they often don't understand "no", and they won't remember the action of peeing if they're not in the middle of doing it. He'll only learn it's not safe to go to the bathroom in front of you, or to be near you when you're near "the toilet". "Rubbing his nose in it" will only teach him to avoid you.

Clean up any accidents with an enzyme cleaner like "Nature's Miracle", available in any pet

store. Also, be sure not to give your puppy too many salty treats (such as rawhide) - the extra salt will make the puppy drink more water, which of course will lead to more needs to pee! (Occasional rawhides are okay, as long as your puppy chews them safely. You might be better off with a stuffed Kong, instead, though!)

It's important to start dog training as early as possible, so your puppy can learn good manners now before he has the chance to develop bad habits. See the [Classes](#) page for the next Wag'N'Train Puppy Kindergarten class, or click [here](#) to find a good trainer near you.

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