

How to potty train your puppy or dog

House training (also known as potty training or housebreaking) your dog or puppy requires patience, commitment and lots of consistency. Accidents are part of the process, but if you follow these basic house training guidelines, you can get the newest member of your family on the right track.

How to potty train your puppy

Establish a routine

Puppies do best on a regular schedule. The schedule teaches them that there are times to eat, times to play and times to do their business. Typically, a puppy can control their bladder one hour for every month of age. So if your puppy is 2 months old, they can hold it for about two hours. Don't go longer than this between bathroom breaks or they're likely to have an accident.

Take your puppy outside frequently—at least every two hours—and immediately after they wake up, during and after playing, and after eating or drinking.

Pick a bathroom spot outside, and always take your puppy (on a leash) to that spot. While your puppy is relieving themselves, use a specific word or phrase that you can eventually use before they go to remind them what to do. Take them out for a longer walk or some playtime only after they have eliminated.

Reward your puppy every time they eliminate outdoors. Praise or give treats—but remember to do so immediately after they've finished, not after they come back inside. This step is vital, because rewarding your dog for going outdoors is the only way to teach what's expected of them. Before rewarding, be sure they're finished. Puppies are easily distracted and if you praise too soon, they may forget to finish until they're back in the house.

Put your puppy on a regular feeding schedule. What goes into a puppy on a schedule comes out of a puppy on a schedule. Depending on their age, puppies may need to be fed two or three times a day. Feeding your puppy at the same times each day will make it more likely that they'll eliminate at consistent times as well, making house training easier for both of you.

Pick up your puppy's water dish about two and a half hours before bedtime to reduce the likelihood that they'll need to relieve themselves during the night. Most puppies can sleep for approximately seven hours without needing a bathroom break. If your puppy does wake you up in the night, don't make a big deal of it; otherwise, they will think it is time to play and won't want to go back to sleep. Turn on as few lights as possible, don't talk to or play with your puppy, take them out to the spot where they relieve themselves and then return them to bed.