



# THE POTTY PROJECT

## (HOUSETRAINING + CRATE)

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### The Keys to Success

More than any other behavior, teaching a pup to reliably eliminate outdoors can feel like a major undertaking. Why? Because it takes vigilance, patience, and commitment for many weeks to help a pup learn where his toilet is and how to "hold it" while indoors. The keys to success are:

- ✓ Follow the same Basic Steps each time without improvising or forgetting.
- ✓ Reward your pup with excellent treats Every Single Time for correct elimination.
- ✓ Keep your pup on a Regular Daily Routine.
- ✓ Prevent accidents using a combination of a Confinement Area + Crate Training.
- ✓ Make sure everyone in your household is on-board with the whole process!

### Basic Steps for Each Outing:

1. Take your pup outside on a leash (even if your potty area is enclosed). Take him to the same place every time and say the cue you want him to learn ("Go Potty", "Get Busy", "Hurry Up")
2. When your pup goes potty, praise softly, then offer him a treat after he is finished. Some pups are shy so you may need to be very quiet while yours eliminates and not look at him.
3. If you're in a safe place, let your pup off leash for a little playtime ONLY IF he has eliminated.
4. If he doesn't eliminate within 5 minutes, don't stand around and don't let him off leash. Go back inside and return him to his crate or confinement area for 10-20 minutes. Then try again.

### A Regular Daily Routine:

- Take your puppy to his potty place first thing in the morning, last thing before bedtime, right after all meals, after all naps, after all play sessions, and whenever he comes out of his crate or Confinement Area (described next page). Keep track of the emerging schedule.
- If you see your puppy sniffing and circling, interrupt him and take him out immediately. These may be the only indicator signals you see for the first few months. Also, monitor water intake.
- Use Super Tight Management indoors until your pup is completely potty trained. This means No Freedom in the house unless he just emptied himself outside. If so, then he's allowed 30 minutes of supervised time in one puppy-proofed area such as the kitchen. Do not grant access to other areas. Keep him in his Confinement Area. Also, monitor his water intake throughout the day. Maintain this routine until potty mistakes are extremely rare.
- When potty mistakes become almost non-existent, you can use Tethering as a way to introduce new rooms. Tethering means the dog is attached via a leash or short line to you, or to a wall, or to a very heavy, dog-proof object. Think of the Tether as a mobile confinement area that allows you to keep an eye on your pup.
- Until your pup is perfectly house-trained, always go outside with him so you can reward at the right moment, ESPECIALLY if the weather turns bad. Keep using a leash until you're certain he knows where his toilet is and uses it reliably in all kinds of weather. For pups who hate to go outside in the rain, it helps to use a big umbrella or find a tall overhang; plus bring extraordinary treats.



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### How to Handle Mistakes:

- Interrupt mistakes as they are happening. Try to use a happy and light tone of voice. Loud or harsh tones can make your puppy afraid to potty in front of you. If you are able to interrupt successfully, then hustle your pup outside to the potty area. Praise him if he finishes there.
- Never ever punish. If your puppy made the mistake 5 hours ago or 5 seconds ago, you are too late. Don't rub his nose in it, yell at him, or handle him roughly. This will make him afraid of you, and he won't feel safe to potty in front of you. You must catch him in the act for the interruption to work.
- Always clean up the indoor mess with an enzyme-based cleaner. This removes residue that might attract him to potty the same place again. First blot with paper towels, then spray some cleaner. Spray a second time and let it air dry so the enzymes can do their job. You may need to re-apply.

### Confinement 101

Confinement might seem like a real bummer for a fun-loving pup, but it's The Absolute Best Way to start your pup out. People often give a new pup too much freedom too soon. Then, when he has a potty accident or chews on the furniture, they confine him. Suddenly confinement is an awful punishment. Instead, do it right from the get-go and make a controlled transition into your home.

### What's a Confinement Area?

A Confinement Area is a puppy-proof location for your pup to hang out when you can't provide 100% supervision and for when you'll be gone any longer than your pup can hold it. This will turn out to be several hours every day. Using long term confinement reduces accidents, prevents destructive chewing, and teaches your puppy to be comfortable when alone. These are important outcomes. Remember, this is a relatively short phase of your dog's life and it will be over soon.

The ideal area has easy-to-clean flooring (no carpets) and can be closed off with a door or baby gate, or enclosed with a portable pen. The best places are the kitchen, the laundry room, a bathroom, or an empty spare room. Furnish the confinement area with an empty crate, a water bowl, chew toys, and a temporary toilet such as a potty pad or litter box or "potty grass" tray.

### Get Your Pup Used to Confinement:

1. Take your puppy out for a walk or bathroom break. Then place him in the confinement area with a chewie or a stuffed Kong. Leave him alone for a few minutes while you go about your business nearby.
2. After 5 minutes or before he finishes his chew toy let him out of the area briefly. Supervise him closely, but don't make a big deal about it or make a fuss over him.
3. Do this several times in the same day, gradually increasing the time you leave your puppy in his area without leaving the house. Vary the length of your indoor absences, from 30 seconds to 20 minutes. Repeat throughout the day after potty breaks and be prepared to clean up accidents.
4. Within the first day or two, start leaving the house for really short intervals like going to the mailbox, checking the laundry, or taking out the trash. Gradually work up to longer absences and short errands. Keep track of your time increments as this is also alone-time training as well.
5. If you are trying to use a crate along with your confinement area to housetrain your pup, keep reading for more tips on how to integrate this tool.



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### The Temporary Toilet:

This is a fail-safe in case your pup can't hold it--which happens a lot the first several weeks. Your goal is to fade the temporary toilet out ASAP by doing frequent potty breaks so your pup learns that it's far more rewarding to eliminate outdoors. If you keep it around, your pup will learn to potty indoors.

Pups form a preference early on for the surface that they like best for elimination. You can use disposable potty pads for easy clean up but the texture of the pads is soft and feels like carpeting under puppy's feet. This can lead to accidents on any soft surface. You'll be better off providing a surface texture that is most similar to the outdoor area he uses. So if you pup potties on grass, use an artificial grass tray. If the outdoor area has wood chips, then use a large litter box with the same chips in it. (*Hot Tip: Line trays and litter boxes with a potty pad on the bottom for easier clean up.*)

### Crate Training 101

When used correctly, a dog crate is an exceptional training and management tool. It is extremely useful for house-training, alone-time, settling, preventing destructive behavior, and travel. A crate can become a favorite place for your pup or newly adopted dog if you introduce it right and keep it as a special safe haven. Use chew toys, praise, and treats to *"Make The Crate Great."*

Crates come in many shapes, sizes, and materials. Plastic crates are very durable. Wire crates with trays are well ventilated and easy to clean. Nylon crates are foldable and portable. For housetraining purposes you want a crate that is quite snug to discourage your pup from eliminating in it. If you don't want to purchase multiple crates, you can buy a larger crate and section off part of it while your pup is little. Then "remodel" it as your dog grows. Don't use bedding in the crate until your pup is totally housetrained. Most dog beds, mats, and pads will trigger crate soiling which is counter-productive.

### Are Crates Humane?

New dog owners often worry that crates are cruel or inhumane. The crate itself is not the problem; it's the irresponsible way they get used to confine dogs for endless hours without a break. This makes the crate a prison, not a sanctuary; and some dogs have very bad memories about their time in jail.

If your dog has had negative experiences with crating, or has learned to howl and whine in the crate, you'll need to rely on a basic Confinement Area as your primary housetraining and management tool, not a crate. (See our handout on *Management* for guidance). It is possible to reintroduce a crate, but we recommend you only attempt this with help from a professional trainer.

### Get Your Pup Used To The Crate:

1. Begin crate training right away, preferably the first day your puppy is in your home. Randomly throw small tasty treats into the EMPTY crate. Praise your puppy when he goes in to collect.
2. Put a treat in the crate when your pup is not looking. Leave the door open so your pup can wander in and find it. Replenish each time while the pup is not looking. Repeat often until you find your pup walking into the crate on his own searching for treats.
3. When your puppy is comfortable going into the crate on his own looking for treats, start signaling him into the crate with a phrase like "Crate Time", then reward. Then close the door for 1-2 seconds and treat him through the door. Let him back out. Repeat this step many times, gradually building up the time to 10 seconds of the door being closed.



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### Get Your Pup Used to The Crate (continued):

4. Stuff a Kong with something very yummy or use a special chewie. Signal your pup into the crate, then put the goodies in. Shut the door. Move about the house normally. Let your puppy back out after 5 minutes or when he finishes his treat. Don't make a fuss over him. Repeat this several times, varying the length of your indoor absences from 5 to 20 minutes.
5. Next, leave your puppy in the crate with something delicious while you leave the house for very short 5 to 10 minute errands, like getting the mail or watering the garden. Gradually build the length of your absences in 10-15 minute increments.

### When Do I Use The Crate?

Use the crate only for very short absences and only if you're 100% certain that your pup or adult dog is "empty", meaning you witnessed some kind of elimination in the past 10-15 minutes. When in doubt, use the Confinement Area instead. These guidelines are for pups who are crated regularly:

- 8-10 weeks            up to 1 hour
- 11-12 weeks        up to 2 hours
- 13-16 weeks        up to 3 hours
- Over 4 months      up to 4 hours

### What Do I Do at Night?

Many dogs are content to sleep in their crates overnight and can build up some real duration because they are less active at night. Young puppies often need potty breaks during the night for a few weeks. If you can do it, it will speed up housetraining. But if you really need your sleep, use the Confinement Area and pull up the water bowl at night. Plan your morning so you can handle the clean up.

When you put your pup to bed for the night he may whine or cry. This is very common the first several nights. Do one last potty break, then give your pup a Kong or chewie while you settle down nearby. Once he's settled, leave quietly and put yourself to bed. If crying continues non-stop, temporarily rearrange sleeping quarters so your pup sleeps near you. This reduces stress and creates normal sleep patterns. When you're further along in housetraining, migrate the sleeping areas back to normal.

### When Can I Give My Pup Free Run of The House?

How about never? Just kidding! But you must wait until your pup is both chew trained and house-trained for periods up to several hours. It can take many months to build up this kind of reliability. When you think your pup is ready for some test runs, make sure he has some serious exercise and a potty outing first. Then confine him to one full room for 1 hour with a chew toy. Choose a tiled room, like the kitchen or the bathroom, so accidents can be easily cleaned. Dog-proof it as needed.

Build up to a few hours the first week. Then add a room each week your pup is accident-free. Supervise each time you introduce him to a new room (remember, you can use Tethering to help). If your pup has an accident, figure out what went wrong and take away that room for a week while you do more test runs before trying again.

### Need More Help?

Housetraining a puppy IS a project. But it's one that we've done a million times. Contact us if you'd like a trainer to work with you privately, or if you'd like a consult with our BravoPup Hotline. We can help get your pup on track to reliable potty habits.