

Canine Housetraining

A. Choose the desired location and teach the puppy where to go

1. Ensure that the location is practical and easy to access (e.g., a short walk from the back door).
2. Go out with your puppy every time and enthusiastically praise elimination in the desired area.
3. Take the pet out when it is most likely to need to eliminate:
 - Following play, exercise, meals, naps and being released from confinement. Feeding and drinking may stimulate elimination. Therefore, supervise well after feeding and plan to take the puppy out to eliminate within 30 to 60 minutes after it eats.
 - Prior to confinement or bedtime.
4. Consider teaching your puppy to 'go' on command by saying a command word, such as 'hurry up,' in a positive tone as it squats to eliminate.

B. Maintain a consistent schedule

1. Offer food two to three times each day at the same time.
2. Only leave the food down for 20 minutes or until your puppy walks away. However, you should also discuss with your veterinarian how to assess your puppy's body score (i.e., whether it is too heavy, skinny, or normal) so that food quantity can be adjusted according to your pet's needs.
3. Take up the water bowl about one to two hours prior to bedtime.

C. Confine/supervise (small room, crate, or tie-down)

1. Until the puppy has completed four consecutive weeks without soiling in the home, it should be within eyesight of a family member or confined to a safe puppy-proofed area.
2. The room, crate, or pen used for confinement is intended to serve as a safe, comfortable bed, playpen, or den for the puppy. The puppy should not be confined to this area until after it has eliminated and had sufficient exercise and social interaction (i.e., when it is due for a sleep, nap, or rest) and should not be confined for any longer than it can control elimination, unless paper-training techniques are being used.
3. Most puppies can control elimination through the night by four months of age. During the daytime, puppies four months or less usually have a few hours of control, while puppies five months and over may be able to last longer between eliminations.
4. If the puppy eliminates in its cage, it may have been left there longer than it can be confined without eliminating, or the cage may be large enough that it sleeps in one end and eliminates in the other; in this case a divider might be used temporarily. Also, if the puppy is anxious about being confined to its crate or left alone, it is unlikely to keep the crate clean.
5. Use a leash indoors to help supervise the puppy. By observing the puppy closely for pre-elimination signs, the puppy can be trained to eliminate outdoors without the need for punishment and may soon learn to signal when it has to eliminate.

D. Handling mistakes

1. Punishment is generally not indicated as part of a housetraining program. The goal is to interrupt your puppy if it is caught in the act of eliminating indoors, and direct it to the appropriate location so that it can be rewarded when it eliminates there.
2. If you catch your puppy in the act of eliminating indoors, quickly say 'no' and clap your hands or pull on the leash to interrupt the behaviour (you have one to two seconds to catch it in the act). Then take the pet outside and praise it enthusiastically upon completion.
3. If urine or stool is found on the floor after the puppy has eliminated, do not consider any form of correction since the puppy will not associate the correction with the elimination. You can prevent re-soiling in the home by closing doors or moving furniture to prevent access to the location, booby trapping the location with a repellent or motion detector, constant supervision of your puppy, and by consistently rewarding elimination outdoors.

E. Odour elimination

Clean up any odours from indoor elimination. Be certain to use enough odour neutralizer to get to the source of the odour. Use one of the products that have been specifically designed to eliminate pet urine odours (chemical modification, enzymes, bacterial odour removal), and follow the label directions.

F. Paper training

While it is best to skip paper training and immediately train the pup to eliminate outdoors, this approach is sometimes necessary for apartment dwellers or when it is not practical to take the puppy outside frequently enough.

For paper training, the puppy should be confined to a room or pen with paper covering the floor except for a sleeping area. The puppy should be confined to this area while you are out, or when you cannot supervise. Paper training can be combined with outdoor training so that the puppy learns that there are two appropriate places to eliminate. The crate could be used for confinement for shorter departures and the papered area for longer departures. Another option is to train the pup to use an indoor litter product or puppy pad.

In some households and in some communities, it might also be practical to house the dog in an outdoor run, or provide a dog door with outdoor access if the owner cannot be home to let the dog outside when it needs to eliminate.