

# Houstraining Your Puppy

No one is going to say that houstraining a puppy is fun, but if done properly and vigilantly for a few months, the rest of your life with the dog should be accident-free. The key is your commitment to that training period!

Please also understand that any “accident” that your pup has is actually your accident. Puppies are not born knowing that they should only relieve themselves outside. Your job is to prevent them from relieving themselves inside and to reinforce them for going outside.

## Supplies

You will find houstraining much easier if you have the proper supplies. You will need:

- a crate
- a way to restrict your pup’s access to the house (puppy gates and/or leashes)
- a designated potty area outside
- tasty treats



## Taking Your Puppy Outside

Take your young pup out frequently (at least every 2-3 hours during the day); older pups and adult dogs can go for longer periods. Go outside with your pup so that you can tell him “Go Potty” (it will come in handy later if he learns to do that on cue!) and also so that he learns that it’s okay to go in front of you. Reinforce this with praise and a treat after he is finished. If you would like to have a designated potty area, then have the pup on leash and always carry or walk him over to that spot.

### Essential times are:

- when he wakes up
- after a meal
- after playtime

Young pups are not likely to hold it all night, so be prepared for a midnight potty break. You can schedule this yourself, or wake when he whines to go out (I haven’t found that responding to a whine from a young pup in the night results in a whining older dog.) Be careful to give enough potty breaks during the day to prevent whining during the day as well as accidents. The goal is to prevent an accident, so take him out often.

It’s also handy to know the signs of a puppy that needs to go

out. Look for sniffing & circling. If you see that, scoop him up and take him out right away!

AND... if you are anywhere other than your own yard, be sure to clean up after your puppy. There are many products for this, but I like the *DoggiPot*<sup>™</sup> bags, which are biodegradable.

## Restricting Access Inside – The Crate

A crate is the very best way to houstrain your pup. Properly used, they work wonders and will result in a better quality of life for you AND your pup!

Size – it should be just large enough for the pup to stand and lie down comfortably. Any bigger, and your pup could make a mess and then avoid it. Either have a smaller crate to use for a while or have dividers for your large crate.

Location – where you are! As a pack animal, your puppy will be stressed if separated from you. Avoid this when you can by having the crate in the room with you (especially at night). You can move a smaller crate from room to room if needed, or you might consider buying a second crate if your pup is large.

When to use – *anytime you cannot supervise your pup.* Puppies naturally spend most of their day napping, so don’t feel too guilty about this. Give them plenty of exercise (play) in the morning before you leave for work and they should be fine until lunchtime. Make the crate a comfy, safe haven for your pup. Cover the top of a wire crate with a blanket to create a den-like atmosphere and have a soft bed or blanket inside. When it’s time for your pup to go inside, always toss in a tasty treat. If you pair this with a phrase such as “in your crate!” your pup will learn to respond to that phrase. Your

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pup should also have something to chew while in there. We recommend natural chews such as bully sticks, pig ears, and hollow bones stuffed with treats (consider filling with cream cheese or peanut butter & freeze them – puppy lollipops!) The licking and chewing will calm your pup as well as provide important jaw exercise (which will help reduce puppy biting, too). For those times when you are home but cannot give your pup 100% of your attention, then block access to other rooms with puppy gates or try leashing your dog to you or large piece of furniture. You will still need to keep an eye on him, however! Of course, it's fine for your pup to spend time in the crate during the day even while you are home. Just be sure he is tired from a vigorous playtime and has something good to chew in there.

**IMPORTANT** – always remove your dog's collar before putting him in his crate to prevent it from getting caught and choking him.

### **Accidents Happen...**

...so be prepared for them. If you catch your pup in the act, then you want to startle him into stopping. A loud clap or foot stomp and a harsh "Ack!" will usually suffice (please adjust the intensity to your dog's temperament - you want to startle, not traumatize). Then scoop him up and take him outside to hopefully finish. At first he may be nervous about finishing in front of you, but if you have spent a lot of time giving him treats and praise for going outside then this shouldn't last long. Please think of your reaction as an interruption of an undesirable behavior, not a punishment, since a young pup is still learning what to do. Those interruptions are also useful for when your catch your pup getting into the trash, etc. Interrupt the behavior, then show the pup what you would like him to do instead.

Use a non-ammonia cleaner for the mess. Urine contains ammonia, so the lingering cleaner smell could actually encourage a repeat performance in that location. Vinegar is a good cleaner, as well as *Nature's Miracle*® and other similar products, which actually break down the odor molecules (get them from your pet supply store). If the accident was urine on a carpet, use cloths to press on the wet areas. Keep pressing and replacing with dry towels until the wetness is gone. You might also consider buying a small carpet cleaner

(you can use vinegar as the cleaning solution).

Accidents in the crate? Perhaps the crate is too large. If so, get a smaller one or use a divider. If the bedding is soaking up the mess, then remove the bedding for a while. Your dog will survive just fine without it and can have it back after he has learned not to mess in his crate. You may also have to remove the bedding if you find your dog entertains himself by shredding it! If that is happening, also consider increasing your pup's exercise before bedtime.

### **If Those Accidents are Happening Often...**

... then think about how you can do a better job to prevent them. Better puppy supervision and containment is usually the answer. Is your puppy slipping into another room to relieve himself? Some people mistakenly think this means the pup actually "knows better" and is being sneaky. Not so. The clever pup has just figured out that "going" in front of people is not good, while "going" somewhere private works quite well. The solution is to not allow him out of your sight, so if he starts to go inside you can stop him. Use those crates and puppy gates! If a dog that was doing really well suddenly starts having accidents, the pup may have a medical issue. Take a urine sample in to your vet.

### **The End is in Sight!**

Housetraining a puppy is a lot of work - there is no getting around that. But when you brought home a puppy you committed yourself to properly training him to live in your house. If you are consistent with your training, this phase of puppyhood should not last too long. A few months of vigilance should provide you with years of happiness with your new pet.

### **When to Put Away the Crate**

After the housetraining phase, the crate will still remain extremely useful as a "play pen" for your pup. Until your puppy has learned to be loose in the house without damaging things (which is certainly destructive and can also be dangerous), then he should still be crated when you are not home. At some point (it varies by puppy) you can start testing him by leaving him loose for short periods. If all is well, then try longer times. Some people find that their pups love their cozy dens so much that they never do store the crates away - they just leave the door to it open.

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