



# Housetraining Your Puppy

Housetraining a puppy requires time, vigilance, patience, and commitment. By following the procedures outlined below you can minimize house-soiling incidents, but it's almost guaranteed your pup will have a few accidents in the house as they learn. It may take several weeks to housetrain your puppy, potentially longer depending on your routine and your puppy. A puppy can usually be considered reliably housetrained when it has not had any accidents for two to three months, but any change in the routine may disrupt the established housetraining. This is a process, so stay consistent and positive!

## Establish a Routine

- Your puppy will do best if he is taken outside on a consistent and frequent schedule. He should have the opportunity to eliminate after waking up from a nap, after playing, and after eating.
- Choose a location not too far from the door to be the bathroom spot. Always take your puppy, on a leash, directly to the bathroom spot. If you clean up an accident in the house, take the soiled rags or paper towels and leave them in the bathroom spot. The smell will help your puppy recognize the area as the place he is supposed to eliminate. While your puppy is eliminating, use a word or phrase, like "go potty", that you can eventually use before he eliminates to remind him of what he's supposed to be doing.
- Praise your puppy every time he eliminates outdoors. Give him a treat, lots of love and praise—throw a party! But pay attention, you don't want to accidentally overwhelm your pup with your excitement. Praise him or treat him immediately after he's finished eliminating, not after he comes back inside the house. This step is really important because rewarding your dog for eliminating outdoors is the best way to teach him the right place to go.
- If possible, put your puppy on a regular feeding schedule. Depending on their age, puppies usually need to be fed three or four times a day. Feeding your puppy at the same times each day will make it more likely that he'll eliminate at consistent times as well. This makes housetraining easier for both of you.

## Supervise, Supervise, Supervise

Don't give your puppy an opportunity to soil in the house. He should be watched at all times when he is indoors. You can tether him to you with a leash or use baby gates to keep him in your view. Watch for signs that he needs to eliminate, like sniffing around or circling. When you see these signs, immediately take him

outside on a leash to his bathroom spot. If he eliminates, praise him and reward him with a treat.

### **Confinement**

When you're unable to watch your puppy closely, he should be confined to an area small enough that he won't want to eliminate there. It should be just big enough for him to comfortably stand, lie down and turn around. This area could be a portion of a bathroom or laundry room, blocked off with boxes or baby gates. Or, you may want to crate train your puppy and use the crate to confine him. If your puppy has spent several hours in confinement, make sure to take him directly to his bathroom spot before doing anything else.

### **Oops!**

Expect your puppy to have an accident in the house—it's a normal part of housetraining.

- When you catch him in the act of eliminating in the house, do something to interrupt him but be careful not to scare him. We aren't punishing him for having the accident, just trying to help redirect him to the appropriate spot. Immediately take him to his bathroom spot, praise him and give him a treat if he finishes eliminating there.
- Don't punish your puppy for eliminating in the house. If you find a soiled area, do nothing but clean it up. Rubbing your puppy's nose in it or taking him to the spot and scolding him (or any other punishment or discipline) will only make him afraid of you or afraid to eliminate in your presence. Animals don't understand punishment the way we do and it will do more harm than good.
- Cleaning the soiled area carefully is very important because puppies are highly motivated to continue soiling in areas that smell like urine or feces.

It's extremely important that you offer frequent potty breaks and use the supervision and confinement procedures outlined above to minimize the number of accidents. If you allow your puppy to eliminate frequently in the house, he'll get confused about where he's supposed to eliminate, which will prolong the housetraining process.

## Puppy Pads

A puppy under 6 months of age cannot be expected to control his bladder for more than a few hours at a time. If you have to be away from home for more than four or five hours a day, this may not be the best time for you to get a puppy. If you're already committed to having a puppy and have to be away from home for long periods of time, you'll need to train your puppy to eliminate in a specific place indoors. Be aware, however, that doing so can prolong the process of teaching him to eliminate outdoors. Teaching your puppy to eliminate on a puppy pad may create a life-long surface preference, meaning that he may, even in adulthood, eliminate indoors when convenient.

When your puppy must be left alone for long periods of time, confine him to an area with enough room for a sleeping space, a playing space and a separate place to eliminate. In the area designated as the elimination place, you can either use potty pads, newspapers, a sod box, or litter. To make a sod box, place sod in a container, like a child's small, plastic swimming pool. You can also find dog litter products at pet supply stores. If you clean up an accident in the house, take the soiled rags or paper towels and put them in the designated elimination place. The smell will help your puppy recognize the area as the place where he is supposed to eliminate.

## Other Types of House-Soiling Problems

If you've consistently followed the housetraining procedures and your puppy continues to eliminate in the house, there may be another reason for his behavior.

- **Medical Problems:** House soiling can often be caused by physical problems, such as a urinary tract infection or a parasite infection. Check with your veterinarian to rule out any possibility of disease or illness.
- **Submissive/Excitement Urination:** Some dogs, especially young ones, temporarily lose control of their bladders when they become excited or feel threatened. This usually occurs during greetings, intense play or when they're about to be punished.
- **Territorial Urine-Marking:** Dogs sometimes deposit urine or feces, usually in small amounts, to scent-mark their territory. Both male and female dogs do this, and it most often occurs when there is a major change in their environment or if they are not spayed or neutered.
- **Separation Anxiety:** Dogs that become anxious when they're left alone may house soil as a result. Usually there are other symptoms, such as destructive behavior or vocalization.

- **Fears or Phobias:** When animals become frightened, they may lose control of their bladder and/or bowels. If your puppy is afraid of loud noises, such as thunderstorms or fireworks, he may house soil when he's exposed to these sounds.

If you believe your dog is house soiling due to one of the reasons above, please consult Homeward Pet's Animal Behavior Manager or another certified dog trainer or behavior consultant for additional help.