

Errorless Housetraining

Housesoiling is a spatial problem, involving perfectly normal, natural, and necessary canine behaviors (peeing and pooping) performed in inappropriate places.

Housetraining is quickly and easily accomplished by praising your puppy and offering a food treat when she eliminates in an appropriate toilet area. Once your pup realizes that her eliminatory products are the equivalent of coins in a food vending machine — that feces and urine may be cashed in for tasty treats — your pup will be clamoring to eliminate in the appropriate spot, because soiling the house does not bring equivalent fringe benefits.

Housesoiling is also a temporal problem: either the puppy is in the wrong place at the right time (confined indoors with full bladder and bowels), or the puppy is in the right place at the wrong time (outdoors in the yard or on a walk, but with empty bladder and bowels).

Timing is the essence of successful housetraining. Indeed, efficient and effective housetraining depends upon the owner being able to predict when the puppy needs to eliminate so that she may be directed to an appropriate toilet area and more than adequately rewarded for doing the right thing in the right place at the right time.

Usually, puppies urinate within half a minute of waking up from a nap and usually defecate within a couple of minutes of that. But who has the time to hang around to wait for puppy to wake up and pee and poop? Instead it's a better plan to wake up the puppy yourself, when you are ready and the time is right.

Short-term confinement to a dog crate offers a convenient means to accurately predict when your puppy needs to relieve herself. Confining a pup to a small area strongly inhibits her from urinating or defecating, since she doesn't want to soil her sleeping area. Hence, the puppy is highly likely to want to eliminate immediately after being released from confinement.

Housetraining Is as Easy as 1-2-3

When you are away from home or if you are too busy or distracted to adhere to the following schedule, keep your puppy confined to her puppy playroom where she has a suitable doggy toilet. Otherwise, when you are at home: 1. Keep your puppy closely confined to her doggy den (crate) or on-leash. 2. Every hour on the hour release your pup from confinement and quickly run her (on-leash if necessary) to the toilet area, instruct your pup to eliminate, and give her three minutes to do so. 3. Enthusiastically praise your puppy when she eliminates, offer three freeze-dried liver treats, and then play/train with the pup indoors; once your puppy is old enough to go outside, take her for a walk after she eliminates.

If errorless housetraining is so easy, why do so many dog owners experience problems? Here are some common questions and answers that help make errorless housetraining work.

Why confine the pup to his doggy den? Why not his playroom?

Short-term close confinement allows you to predict when your puppy wants to go so that you may be there to direct him to the appropriate spot and reward him for doing the right thing in the right place at the right time. During the hour-long periods of close confinement, as your puppy lies doggo in dreamy repose, his bladder and bowels are slowly but surely filling up. Whenever the big hand reaches twelve and you dutifully release the pup to run to his indoor toilet or backyard doggy toilet to relieve himself, your puppy is likely to eliminate pronto. Knowing when your puppy wants to go allows you to choose the spot and most importantly to reward your puppy handsomely for using it. Rewarding your puppy for using his toilet is the secret to successful housetraining. If on the other hand the puppy were left in his playroom, he would most likely use his indoor toilet but would not be rewarded for doing so.

What if my puppy doesn't like going in his crate?

Before confining your puppy to his crate (doggy den), you first need to teach him to love the crate and to love confinement. This is so easy to do. Stuff a couple of hollow chewtoys with kibble and the occasional treat. Let your puppy sniff the stuffed chewtoys and then place them in the crate and shut the door with your puppy on the outside. Usually it takes just a few seconds for your puppy to beg you to open the door and let him inside. In no time at all, your pup will be happily preoccupied with his chewtoys. When leaving the puppy in his long-term confinement area, tie the stuffed chewtoys to the inside of the crate and leave the crate door open. Thus, the puppy can choose whether he wants to explore the small area or lie down on his bed in his crate and try to extricate the kibble and treats from his chewtoys. Basically, the stuffed chewtoys are confined to the crate and the puppy is given the option of coming or going at will. Most puppies choose to rest comfortably inside the crate with stuffed chewtoys for entertainment. This technique works especially well if your puppy is not fed kibble from a bowl but only from chewtoys or by hand, as lures and rewards in training. To use this method, each morning measure out the puppy's daily ration of food into a bag to avoid overfeeding.

What if I don't like putting my puppy in a crate?

Short-term confinement, whether to a crate or tie-down, is a temporary training measure to help you teach your puppy where to eliminate and what to chew. A dog crate is the best housetraining tool to help you accurately predict when your dog wishes to relieve herself and is the best training tool to help you to teach your puppy to become a chewtoyaholic. Once your puppy has learned to eliminate only in appropriate areas and to chew only appropriate objects, she may be given free run of the house and garden for the rest of her life. You will probably find however, that after just a few

days your puppy learns to love her crate and will voluntarily rest inside. Your puppy's very own den is a quiet, comfortable, and special doggy place. If, on the other hand, your puppy is given unsupervised free run of the house from the outset, the odds are that she will be confined later on — first to the yard, then to the basement, then to a cage in an animal shelter, and then to a coffin. Without a doubt, housesoiling and destructive chewing are the two most prevalent terminal illnesses in dogs. Using a dog crate will help you prevent these problems from ever developing in your puppy.

Why not just leave the puppy outdoors until he is housetrained?

Who is going to housetrain your pup outside — a shrub? If the dog is left outside unattended, he will become an indiscriminate eliminator. Basically, your puppy will learn to go wherever he wants, whenever he wants, and he will likely do the same whenever you let him indoors. Puppies left outdoors and unsupervised for long periods of time seldom become housetrained. Also, they tend to become indiscriminate barkers, chewers, diggers, and escapists, and they may be more easily stolen. Outdoor puppies also become so excited on the few occasions they are invited indoors that eventually they are no longer allowed inside at all.

Why release the pup every hour?

Why not every 55 minutes or every three hours? Is it really necessary to do it on the hour? Puppies have a 45-minute bladder capacity at three weeks of age, 75-minute capacity at eight weeks, 90-minute capacity at twelve weeks and two-hour capacity at 18 weeks. Releasing your puppy every hour offers you an hourly opportunity to reward your dog for using a designated toilet area. You do not have to do this precisely each hour, but it is much easier to remember to do so each hour on the hour.

Why run the puppy to the toilet? Why not walk sedately?

If you take your time getting your puppy to his doggy toilet, you may find that he pees or poops en route. Hurrying your puppy tends to jiggle his bowels and bladder so that he really wants to go the moment you let him stand still and sniff his toilet area.

Why not just put the puppy outside by himself? Can't he do it on his own?

Of course he can. But the whole point of predicting when your puppy wants to relieve himself is so you can show him where and offer well-deserved praise and reward. Thus your puppy will learn where you would like him to go. Also, if you see your puppy eliminate, you know that he is empty; you may then allow your empty puppy supervised exploration of the house for a while before returning him to his den.

Why instruct the pup to eliminate? Doesn't he know he wants to go?

By instructing your puppy to eliminate beforehand and by rewarding him for eliminating afterward, you will teach your pup to go on command. Eliminating on cue is a boon when you are traveling with your dog and in other time-constrained situations. Ask your

pup to "Hurry up," "Do your business," "Go Pee and Poop," or use some other socially acceptable, euphemistic eliminatory command.

Why give the puppy three minutes? Isn't one minute sufficient?

Usually, a young pup will urinate within 30 seconds of being released from short-term confinement, but it may take one or two minutes for him to defecate. It is certainly worthwhile to allow your pup three minutes to complete his business

What if the puppy doesn't go?

Your puppy will be more likely to eliminate if you stand still and let him circle around you on leash. If your puppy does not eliminate within the allotted time, no biggie! Simply pop the pup back in his crate and try again in half an hour. Repeat the process over and over until he does eliminate. Eventually, your puppy will eliminate outdoors and you will be able to reward him. Therefore, on subsequent hourly trips to his toilet your puppy will be likely to eliminate promptly.

Why praise the puppy? Isn't relief sufficient reward?

It is far better to express your emotions when praising your puppy for getting it right, than when reprimanding the poor pup for getting it wrong. So really praise that pup: "Gooooooooooooo Puppy!" Housetraining is no time for understated thank yous. Don't be embarrassed about praising your puppy. Embarrassed dog owners usually end up with housesoiling problems. Really reward your puppy. Tell your puppy that he has done a most wonderful and glorious thing!

Why offer treats? Isn't praise sufficient reward?

In a word, no! The average person cannot effectively praise a moribund lettuce. And specifically, many owners—especially men—seem incapable of convincingly praising their puppies. Consequently, it might be a good idea to give the pup a food treat or two (or three) for his effort. Input for output! "Wow! My owner's great. Every time I pee or poop outside, she gives me a treat. I never get yummy treats when I do it on the couch. I can't wait for my owner to come home so I can go out in the yard and cash in my urine and feces for food treats!" In fact, why not keep some treats in a screw-top jar handy to the doggy toilet?

Why freeze-dried liver?

Housetraining is one of those times when you want to pull out all of the stops. Take my word for it: When it comes to housetraining, use the Ferrari of dog treats — freeze-dried liver.

Do we really have to give three liver treats when the puppy pees or poops? Isn't this a wee bit anal retentive?

Yes and no. Certainly you do not have to give your puppy exactly three treats every time. But it's a funny thing: If I suggest that people offer a treat each time their puppy

eliminates promptly in the right place, they rarely follow instructions. Whenever I tell people to give three treats, however, they will painstakingly count out the treats to give to their puppy. Here's what I am trying to say: Handsomely praise and reward your puppy every time he uses a designated toilet area.

Why play with the puppy indoors?

If you reward your pup for using his doggy toilet, you will know he is empty. "Thank you, empty puppy!" What better time to play with or train your puppy indoors without facing the risk of a messy mistake. Why get a puppy unless you want to spend some quality (feces-free) time with him?

Why bother to take an older puppy outdoors for a walk when he's empty?

Many people fall into the trap of taking their puppy outside or walking him so that he may eliminate, and when he does they bring him indoors. Usually it takes just a couple of trials before the puppy learns, "Whenever my urine or feces hits the ground, my walk ends!" Consequently, the pup becomes reluctant to eliminate outside, and so when brought home after a long jiggling play or walk, he is in dire need to relieve himself. Which he does. It is a much better plan to praise your puppy for using his doggy toilet and then take him for a walk as a reward for eliminating. Get in the habit of taking an older puppy to his doggy toilet (in your yard or curbside in front of your apartment building), standing still, and waiting for the pup to eliminate. Praise the pup and offer liver treats when he does: "Good dog, let's go walkies!" Clean up and dispose of the feces in your own trash can, and then go and enjoy a poopless walk with your dog. After just a few days with a simple "no poop—no walk" rule, you'll find you have the quickest urinator and defecator in town.

What should I do if I've done all the above and I catch the puppy in the act of making a mistake?

Pick up a rolled newspaper and give yourself a smack! Obviously you did not follow the instructions above. Who allowed the urine-and-feces-filled puppy to have free-range access to your house? You! Should you ever reprimand or punish your puppy when you catch him in the act, all he will learn is to eliminate in secret—that is, never again in your untrustworthy presence. Thus you will have created an owner-absent housesoiling problem. If you ever catch your pup in the act of making a mistake that was your fault, at the very most you can quickly, softly, but urgently implore your pup, "Outside, outside, outside!" The tone and urgency of your voice communicates that you want your puppy to do something promptly, and the meaning of the words instruct the puppy where. Your response will have limited effect on the present mistake, but it helps prevent future mistakes.

Never reprimand your dog in a manner that is not instructive. Nonspecific reprimands only create more problems (owner-absent misbehavior) as well as frightening the pup and eroding the puppy-owner relationship. Your puppy is not a "bad puppy." On the

contrary, your puppy is a good puppy that has been forced to misbehave because his owner could not, or would not, follow simple instructions. Please reread and follow the above instructions!

The Doggy Toilet

For the best doggy toilet, equip a litter box or cover a flat tray with what will be the dog's eventual toilet material. For example, for rural and suburban pups that will eventually be taught to relieve themselves outside on earth or grass, lay down a roll of turf. For urban puppies that will eventually be taught to eliminate at curbside, lay down a couple of thin concrete tiles. Your puppy will soon develop a very strong natural preference for eliminating on similar outdoor surfaces whenever he can. If you have a backyard dog toilet area, in addition to the indoor playroom toilet, take your pup to his outdoor toilet in the yard whenever you release him from his doggy den.

If you live in an apartment and do not have a yard, teach your puppy to use his indoor toilet until he is old enough to venture outdoors at three months of age.

For a goog indoor or balcony doggy toilet check out [PetaPotty](#) or [The Pet Loo](#).

Training Your Dog to Use an Outdoor Toilet

For the first few weeks, take your puppy outside on-leash. Hurry to his toilet area and then stand still to allow the puppy to circle (as he would normally do before eliminating). Reward your puppy each time he "goes" in the designated spot. If you have a fenced yard, you may later take your puppy outside off-leash and let him choose where he would like to eliminate. But make sure to reward him differentially according to how close he hits ground zero. Offer one treat for doing it outside quickly, two treats for doing it within, say, five yards of the outdoor doggy toilet, three treats for within two yards, and five treats for a bull's eye.

Once your dog has not had a housesoiling mistake for at least three months, you may increase your puppy's playroom to two rooms. For each subsequent month without a mistake your puppy may gain access to another room, until eventually he enjoys free run of the entire house and garden when left at home alone. If a housesoiling mistake should occur, go back to the original puppy confinement program for at least a month.

Adapted from [BEFORE You Get Your Puppy](#) by Dr. Ian Dunbar

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