



Housetraining a Puppy or Re-training an Adult Dog (including crate training)

Dogs are basically clean animals; they don't like to spend time where they have urinated or defecated. Some dogs adopted as adults may need a refresher course in housetraining. The same rules apply to re-training an adult dog as to training a puppy.

Before putting this housetraining program in place decide where you want your dog's "toilet" to be. It can be in the backyard - anywhere - or it can be a specific place in the backyard. Once you and your family understand where your puppy's bathroom is going to be; you can begin teaching him where he will be allowed to eliminate.

Steps to Successful Housetraining

- Establish a schedule. Keep meals and water on a schedule and provide potty breaks accordingly. Small pups should be taken outside 15 minutes after eating or drinking and **immediately** following naps and play sessions.
- Go outside with your dog. When he gets to the designated area and eliminates, Praise! Praise! Praise! After all, better on the lawn than on your carpet!
- In the house, watch your pet at all times. If you can't, confine him to a crate.
 - The crate should be just large enough for the dog to stand up, turn around and lie down comfortably.
 - Put the crate in a high traffic area so the dog is not isolated while in his crate.
 - Remove your dog's collar before crating.
 - Teach your dog to like the crate by dropping a small food treat in the middle of the crate and praising him when he goes in to retrieve the treat. Keep the door open and practice until the dog is happily entering the crate to get the treat. Next drop the food treat all the way to the back of the crate. Repeat with his food bowl and then his favorite chew toy. After he is used to going in with the door open, try and close the door slowly and gradually increase the amount of time the door is closed. Don't encourage your dog to leave the crate when you open the door. If he wants to lay inside and play with his toy, let him!
 - Never use a crate as punishment.
- Dogs generally don't like to soil in their "dens" so they are not likely to use their crate as their "toilet." Take your dog out of the crate at regular intervals and **directly** outside. Praise him when he goes to the bathroom. If he does not go, bring him back inside, and either watch him closely or put him back into his crate, for a little while longer. Then, back outside. Watch for sniffing and circling - such behavior usually means he's ready to eliminate. If you are inside and see this behavior, hustle him outside immediately. If you are outside, begin your praising routine.

Following these steps should make it relatively easy to housetrain your pet. Remember, the keys are consistency, keeping an eye on him, crate training, and sticking to a schedule. Don't expect your dog to "ask" to go outside. Just keep his comings and "goings" on a regular schedule, appropriate for the dog's age and ability to control his bladder.

FAQ:

1. What happens if the first few times I go outside with my pet he goes right away, but after a few days he starts stalling and won't "go?" Then, when I bring him in, he immediately urinates on my carpet.
 - a. *A couple of things. First, don't forget your crate. If a dog will not eliminate outside, as soon as he comes inside, he should go right into his crate. Wait 15 minutes to half an hour and take him outside again. Repeat as needed. Also, during housetraining, try not to join your pet outside until after he eliminates, and do not immediately bring him back inside once he has been successful – that is not fun for him.*
 - b. *Some dogs will hold off going to the bathroom so they can keep you outside with them a bit longer. To avoid that, once he urinates or defecates, go out, Praise! Praise! Praise! and then spend a few extra minutes playing in the yard. Teach him that going to the bathroom does not end your fun time outside with him.*

2. What happens if my dog goes to the bathroom in his crate?
 - a. *For starters, make sure you are giving your pet plenty of opportunities to go outside. (Do not expect a 10-week old puppy to be able to "hold it" for much longer than 3-4 hours.) Dogs do not generally like to lay where they have eliminated, so the crate should be just big enough for him to stand up, turn around and lay down comfortably. If the crate is too big, he may urinate or defecate in one corner and lay in the other. Also, as tempting as it is to put a nice, soft blanket in the crate, this should be avoided during the housetraining period. Your dog may learn to eliminate on the blanket and push it into a corner... there! All clean.*

3. What happens if I have an 8-week old puppy and I work full-time?
 - a. *A puppy is not physically able to hold urine for eight hours until he is about four months old. If you have a puppy younger than that, either come home mid-day and let him out, or arrange for a neighbor, friend or family member to let him out. This will be temporary, just until your puppy reaches four months of age. If you cannot arrange for someone to let your young puppy out, housetraining may take longer than normal since he is learning to eliminate inside, and you will have to break that habit later. In the event that you are forced to leave a puppy under four months of age for a full day, you will need to give him enough room in the crate to eliminate and get away from it so he does not get in the habit of laying in urine or feces. As you can see, this is contrary to what was suggested as the ideal earlier, hence the reason it takes longer to housetrain.*

4. What happens if I catch my dog "going" on my living room carpet?
 - a. *If you actually catch your pet "in the act" or starting the sniffing and/circling behavior, you must move swiftly and let him know you do not approve. Timing is everything. For most dogs, a loud hand clap, or slapping a hand on the wall or table is enough to startle them and interrupt "the flow." Then get him outside and when he finishes out there: Praise! Praise! Praise! If you do not notice until after your dog has finished eliminating inside, there is no point in yelling or holding a grudge. He will not understand. Be sure to clean the area thoroughly to remove the odor and watch him more closely to avoid a repeat.*
 - b. **Never physically punish your dog for inappropriate elimination.** *Your dog will associate you with the punishment and will not want to "go" in front of you. This may ruin your chances to praise him for "going" in the correct area because he is now afraid to eliminate in front of you!*

5. I'd like my pup to use our yard as a bathroom and not the neighbors' yards during walks. Can I do that?
 - a. *Sure. While you are going through the housetraining process, assign a word ("busy" or "hurry" are popular) to the act of your puppy eliminating. Simply say the word while he is going and praise upon completion. Before you know it, you will have him going on command. Then simply ask your dog to eliminate in your yard before your walk.*