

Basic Information on **Housebreaking a Puppy**

There are a couple of basic methods to housebreaking a puppy: using a crate and taking the puppy outside or using puppy pads/litter box.

Crate Training

We believe in crate training **so strongly** that we have a handout dedicated to it. (Please pick up a copy of "Basic Information on Crate Training") Puppies were taught early on by their mothers *never to soil their sleeping area*. Young puppies, who still nurse, will toddle off to a far corner to eliminate. Consequently, a young puppy (6-12 weeks) will not soil his crate.

Whenever your puppy is unsupervised, confine it to it's crate. At first, leave your puppy for only a few hours at a time. The length of time a puppy can be left in a crate will increase as it grows older and it's bladder matures. Do not leave your puppy too long - this would force it to use it's bed as a bathroom. (It would only complicate housebreaking if it thinks soiling it's sleeping area is acceptable!)

1. When you return home, immediately open the crate door and **carry your puppy** outside to an acceptable bathroom area. Carry it so it does not stop and pick an inappropriate area to do it's business. (As it gets older and more experienced, you can let the puppy run to the door.)
2. Give a "potty" command. Use any words you like, but be consistent. We like "Go Potty". Be sure to use a low monotone when giving the command.
3. "Ignore" your puppy until it eliminates. Puppies may be glad to see you and wish to play. Discourage any interactions until it finishes it's business.
4. After it finishes, give your puppy **lavish** praise. Make a very big deal! But only for a minute and directly after elimination. After a few times it will begin to associate elimination with your attention and praise.
5. After elimination, take it to *another* part of the yard to play! Do not let your puppy play where it eliminates so that it doesn't get confused about why it is there. If you go inside - *without playing at all*, the puppy may not eliminate immediately and you will spend more and more time outside waiting for your puppy to "go". Or he will hold it and then eliminate inside. Even a minute or two of playtime will be enough.



If this was a "false alarm" and your puppy does not "go", **leave the potty area**. Do not confuse it by playing in the potty area. You need your puppy to know exactly what is expected in the designated potty area. Do not make the mistake of simply tossing the puppy out the back door by itself. There are three reasons for this. First, your puppy might not realize why it is there - you are not there to give the "potty" command. It may think it has done something "bad" and is being ousted from it's "pack" (you and your family). Second, you need to "see" your puppy eliminate so you can give plenty of praise (this reinforces the command). Third, you need to bring your puppy back inside **immediately** (remember - give it a couple of minutes of playtime in a separate area of the yard) so it is never confused about why it is there and what it needs to do in the "potty" place. Keep the leash near the door and take the puppy out at regular times.

Paper & Litter Box Training

We do not recommend using newspaper for housebreaking. Naturally, we prefer crate training, but plastic-backed puppy training pads work for a lot of people. These are highly absorbent pads which are scented to attract the puppy. Newspaper can be very messy and puppies tend to shred it and play with it. A doggie litter box is larger than a cat litter box and generally uses a larger, more absorbent pelleted litter. At first, use with an attractant such as Puppy Housebreaking Aid by Four Paws. Puppies will relieve themselves where another dog has eliminated. So, when they smell the scented puppy pad or the litter with an attractant applied, they assume a dog has eliminated there and this is an appropriate place to "potty". Following any active play, nap-time, water drinking, meal period, or "determined sniffing" behavior follow these four steps.

1. Carry the puppy to the elimination area (puppy pad / litter box).
2. Give the "potty" command. (Remember to always use the same command.)
3. Ignore your puppy until it eliminates.
4. Give plenty of praise once it eliminates.

Hints and Information

Puppies must be between 3 and 4 months of age before housebreaking can be *fully* achieved. Female dogs may have more difficulty with housebreaking because they are more sensitive and have smaller bladders than males. You must be home to properly train a puppy. If you work, make arrangements for someone to visit your puppy midway through the day.

Feeding a premium pet food (Grandma Mae's Country Naturals, Science Diet, Natural Balance, Premium Edge, Nutro, Wellness, Taste of the Wild, Blue Buffalo) **is one of the most important steps to housebreaking a puppy.** Premium foods have a "fixed formula". That means the contents of each bag are identical – **every time, every bag!** Grocery store pet foods may use chicken in their foods, but they don't use the same chicken parts every time. They will use whatever is cheapest on the market at that time. It may be chicken liver one time and chicken necks at another time. This change in ingredients can cause digestion problems for your puppy, which may lead to diarrhea or loose stool. A loose stool is messier to clean up and harder for a young puppy to "hold". Your puppy **WANTS** to do the right thing, but if fed poor quality pet food, it often can't help having an "accident".

The protein content in a "premium pet food" is high quality – *often human grade* – and easily digestible. This is crucial since your puppy will eat less of a premium pet food and digest a higher percentage of what it eats - therefore it will not have to "go" as much. Plus, it will have a small, firm stool which is easier to "hold" (and easier for you to clean-up if necessary.)

"Premium pet foods" also contain far less sodium than "grocery store" brands. Your puppy will not have to drink a lot of extra water to compensate for the added sodium. This will help cut back on "accidents" inside the house.

Feed your puppy 2 - 3 times a day for ten minutes each meal. Measure the food based on the package directions. After ten minutes pick up the bowl with any uneaten food. (Return uneaten food to the bag!) A puppy will usually eliminate about 30 minutes after mealtime.

Knowing when a pup is ready to go is crucial to housebreaking. Take your puppy to the designated spot after it wakes from a nap, after eating or drinking, or after play time. Puppies signal their need by whining, sniffing the floor, and running around in circles. If a mistake is made, give a firm "NO" and carry the puppy to the proper spot.

If you find a mess, NEVER shove the puppy's nose in it's own excrement! That's an old wives tale! We think it is disgusting, but puppies don't - they think you're teaching them to EAT their waste! Also, the puppy has

usually forgotten he has made a mistake. All it knows is that for no reason whatsoever (he doesn't remember), you picked it up, yelled, and then shoved it's nose in excrement. If the puppy cannot associate a mistake on it's part with your anger, it will begin to fear your every move!

Remember when your puppy was still nursing, it's mother taught it not to mess up it's sleeping area. You must teach your dog that your entire house is equivalent to a sleeping area. This lesson is easier if at first the pup is confined to a small area of your house. Use a puppy gate to allow limited access to only one room. Usually this is the room you occupy at that time. After three or four days of "no accidents", expand it's area. Allow access to the two main rooms that your family frequents. Further expand the area as your puppy becomes more proficient at potty training.

When your puppy does have an accident, make sure you thoroughly clean the area with an **enzyme product** (such as Nature's Miracle or Bust It) made for this purpose. You may not smell urine or feces *but your puppy will*. Your puppy may think another dog has eliminated there and this is an appropriate area. A good cleaning of the area using an enzyme product will help remove the scent and keep your puppy from making a mistake.

Do not become discouraged. All puppies take time to learn. **Be consistent!** Use the same commands every time and insist that everyone else use these commands also. Always **interrupt** the puppy if it is going in the wrong place! Take it to it's "spot" frequently! Always praise when you see it go to it's spot! When the lessons are consistent, it's behavior will be consistent, too.

Please Note: The information in this handout is meant to provide basic information only. Please see a salesperson for more information.

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