

Toilet Training (House Training)

The following are the keys to successfully houstraining your puppy:

1. Manage your puppy's environment.
2. Keep the puppy on a feeding schedule (routine).
3. Pick up any food the puppy does not consume after 15 minutes.
4. Always reward the correct behaviour (eliminating) when and where it happens.
5. Always be consistent.

Basic Rules for Houstraining

Introduce a cue (word or words) to him when taking him to the designated elimination area, especially if the puppy is being trained to go outside. Do not take the puppy for a walk to eliminate. Instead, take him to a designated place to eliminate and give him about six feet of leash to walk around while you are standing somewhat still. Once he has done his business, mark the elimination that has occurred in the proper area and **reward him** with a treat or take him for a walk as a reward.

If you take the puppy for a walk to eliminate, the puppy can easily become distracted with all the different smells and sounds, and he may wait until he comes back inside the house to eliminate. The other reason a walk is not recommended for elimination is because puppies quickly learn that once they eliminate the walk is over. They will learn to hold it as long as possible so the walk does not end. As the puppy's ability to hold it grows, walks will take longer and longer while waiting for the puppy to eliminate. There will be times when you do not have the time to continue the walk, you will come back inside the house, and he will eliminate on the floor.

Bring a treat with you when you take him outside to eliminate. Offering **special treats** just for proper elimination can make the training easier. The only time your puppy gets this really great treat is when he eliminates in the designated area. **The second he is done with his business**, mark the elimination with a word like "yes" or use a click from a clicker, then reward the behaviour with the treat. After rewarding the initial elimination, stand still and wait if you think the puppy needs to eliminate again. Once he is finished eliminating the second or third time, mark and reward the proper elimination each time he eliminates. However, *do not get too excited* when marking the elimination behaviour or you might distract him. A verbal "Yes, good boy" in a soft voice will suffice.

Avoid giving him the treat inside when he returns from outside. The puppy will want to return inside too quickly to get his treat. He will relate the treat to coming back into the house and not the elimination he just did. Then, instead of completely finishing all his business outside, he will want to go back inside to get his treat.

Manage Your Puppy's Environment

You must constantly watch your puppy when he is not confined to a room, space, or crate. Accidents happen when you try to watch the puppy and cook, watch TV, do homework, or talk on

the phone. Young puppies require constant supervision to understand what is expected of them with their new families and to learn what the rules are. When you are distracted, you may miss your puppy's warning signals that tell you he is looking for a place to eliminate. Some puppies will:

- ✓ sniff the ground
- ✓ others will circle
- ✓ some will raise their tails higher than normal
- ✓ some will sit by the door leading outside
- ✓ and others will walk quickly and suddenly squat.

Every puppy has his or her own style and signals. **It is your job to learn your puppy's signals.**

When accidents occur—and they will—***do not scold your puppy.*** *This is very important!* Scolding will cause many puppies to hide when relieving themselves so they do not get in trouble. This is why many new puppy parents end up finding surprises behind the couch or under tables. Elimination mistakes are usually the result of the puppy not being properly supervised. Paying close attention to him when he is not confined to his space will help prevent accidents from happening in the first place.

When an accident is in progress, make a short sound such as clapping your hands together to **distract** your puppy. Quickly scoop him up, if physically possible, and take him to the proper elimination area either outside or a wee-wee pad inside to finish his business. Stay with him until he is finished, and remember to mark and reward him with a treat or walk for eliminating in the designated area. Clean the accident area with a product that will eliminate the odour completely. Do not use any products that contain ammonia, however. They only encourage future eliminations in the same place. Use products that are made specifically for this purpose.

Remember to put your puppy in his crate or confined area when you cannot manage his environment. Most puppies want to keep their sleeping area clean and will try to hold it as long as possible before eliminating there. Puppies need to eliminate on a fairly regular schedule/routine:

- ✓ when they first get up in the morning
- ✓ after a nap
- ✓ after play periods
- ✓ 5 to 10 minutes after drinking
- ✓ 5 to 20 minutes after eating
- ✓ before they go into their crates
- ✓ when they first come out of their crates
- ✓ before going to bed at night

During waking hours, puppies may need to eliminate *every hour or so.*

Small dogs can sometimes be a little more difficult to houstrain. They are very close to the ground, and you may not realize when your puppy is actually eliminating until it is too late. Keep a close eye on little ones to help them learn what you expect from them. Manage their environment carefully.

Teaching Your Puppy to Communicate

If you are taking your puppy outside to eliminate, it will be important to teach him how to tell you he needs to go outside in the future. You can begin working on this now by teaching your puppy to *speak* (bark) to let you know he needs to go outside.

Offer your puppy a special treat and tease him with the treat until he barks. The second the puppy barks, say the word “speak,” then mark the behaviour by using a word like “yes” or a click from a clicker. Reward him with the treat for barking. Repeat this exercise several times until he will *speak* on cue.

After he has learned to *speak* on cue, every time you take him outside, ask him if he wants to go outside, and give the cue “speak.” Mark the behaviour and reward him with a tiny treat, then take him outside to his designated elimination area. In time, he will learn to tell you he needs to go outside by barking.

As a general guide, you can confine an 8-week-old puppy for three hours, a 12-week-old puppy four hours, and a 16-week-old puppy for five hours before he will usually need to eliminate. If he does not get a chance to relieve himself within that time frame, you may end up with him soiling his area. **Do not get upset with him** if this occurs; he simply could not hold it any longer. This was the result of human error, not your puppy’s mistake.

If he is sleeping, you do not have to wake him up to go outside. Wait for him to wake up on his own before you take him to his designated elimination area. Remember to take the treats with you when you go outside so you will be ready to mark and reward him for eliminating in the proper area. **House (toilet) training takes time, patience, and consistency.**

Toilet Training Troubleshooting

Suppose it has been more than a month since your puppy had an accident in the house. You think your job is complete and your puppy is now housetrained. Then, more housetraining accidents start to appear. What happened?

- ✓ The puppy may have a medical problem, such as an infection, and needs to be seen by our vet.
- ✓ You forgot to teach him a cue that lets the puppy alert you to the fact he needs to go outside. If this happened, go back to the basics and introduce the cue (word or words). Cues such as “Outside,” “Let’s go outside,” “Do you want to go outside?” are appropriate. You can use any word or words you choose, just be sure to *use the same word or words consistently*. Your puppy can learn to respond by getting excited, barking, or sitting.
- ✓ You forgot to teach your puppy to communicate with you when he needs to go outside. This can be accomplished by teaching him to *speak* (bark), *sit*, or even ring a bell that is hung on the door you use when taking him outside. You may also use a bell placed on the floor for your puppy to ring to let you know he needs to go out.
- ✓ You take your puppy for a walk, and he comes in the house to eliminate. Since puppies are constantly learning, the puppy now realizes that once he eliminates, the enjoyable walk

comes to an end. As a result, he holds it as long as possible. You run out of time to keep walking him and come back inside. The walk has ended and the puppy forgot to eliminate while outside or did not want to because he didn't want the walk to be over. Either way, the puppy eliminates in the house. If this has happened, return to the basics and take the puppy to the designated elimination area. Stand there for a few minutes and wait until he eliminates. If he does, mark and reward him. If he does not eliminate in the elimination area, take him back inside and confine him to either his crate or a designated area. Wait 10 to 15 minutes and repeat the exercise. This must be continued until he finally eliminates outside. Mark the behaviour (elimination) with "Yes" or a click from a clicker. Now take your puppy for a nice walk as the reward. You will need to repeat this exercise every time he needs to go out over the next several days until he understands that walks happen only after the elimination occurs.

- ✓ Your puppy does half of his eliminating outside and the other half of his eliminating inside. This can happen when treats are given to the puppy inside the house instead of outside where the elimination occurred. The puppy thinks he is being rewarded for coming into the house and, in turn, he hurries to get back into the house for his reward. Your puppy cannot relate the reward to the desired behaviour when the behaviour is performed at one location and the reward is given at another location. Rewarding your puppy in a different location only confuses him. To address this issue, take the treats outside with you and be ready to mark and reward him as soon as the elimination occurs. If you know he is not done, be patient. Stand there and wait for the next elimination. Once it has occurred, mark and reward immediately at the location of the elimination. After a few days, he will connect the wonderful treats with eliminating and will want to do as much eliminating as possible while outside to receive the rewards. If you are still having problems with your puppy soiling in the house, please contact our practice. Your puppy may be dealing with a health issue.

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If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us