

Rovers Return Dog Rescue (RRR)

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How to Potty Train a Puppy

Potty training should begin with developing a schedule that both you and your dog can follow. You may also wish to use a repeatable phrase, such as “bathroom” or “potty,” each time you take your dog to the elimination area so that they learn to associate that word with the action. Here are some do’s and don’ts of potty training a dog.

Follow these tips, and you will have your puppy or adult dog potty trained before you know it!

Do's of Potty Training a Puppy

Take Your Puppy Out Often

New puppies, especially those under 12 weeks of age, should be taken outside every one to two hours. Before 12 weeks of age, puppies are still developing the muscles necessary to hold their eliminations. It is also a good habit to take your puppy out after sleeping, playing, eating, or drinking.

Stick to a Feeding Schedule

Typically, it is recommended to feed your puppy two meals a day. Feed each meal at the same time each day. Dogs will naturally eliminate shortly after eating, so developing a consistent feeding schedule can avoid confusion and accidents in the house.

Use Crate Training as an Aid to Potty Training

Crate training is a very effective tool to help not only with potty training your puppy, but also with creating a safe place for your puppy to call home. Dogs are naturally den animals, so their instincts will tell them to find a quiet place to eat and rest at the end of the day.

Dogs do not like to eliminate where they sleep or eat, so training your puppy to be comfortable in a crate is a great way to prevent them from having accidents in the house. The crate should not be used as punishment, but it should be used whenever your puppy cannot be directly supervised and for naptime and bedtime.

Choosing the correct crate size is extremely important, especially for large breed dogs that grow rapidly during puppyhood. Keep in mind that your puppy should only have enough room to stand up, turn around, and lie down comfortably.

Any more room will give your dog room to rest in one corner and pee or poop in the other. Many crates come with a divider that can be moved as your puppy grows.

Always Practice Positive Reinforcement

Positive reinforcement is the key to successful potty training. Positive reinforcement will teach your puppy that they get rewarded for going to the bathroom outside.

Each time your puppy eliminates outside, immediately reward them with verbal praise, treats, or a favorite toy. The reward should immediately follow the event so that your puppy makes a positive association with eliminating outside.

Recognize When Your Puppy Needs to Go Out

Constant supervision is another important part of successful potty training a puppy. Learning the clues or signals that indicate that your puppy needs to eliminate will prevent unnecessary accidents in the house. Most dogs will sniff, make circles, wander off, whine, or sit by the door to indicate they need to go to the bathroom.



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Put Your Puppy on a Leash for Potty Breaks

You should always put your puppy on a leash when you go outside for a potty break. This will not only help get them comfortable with being on a leash, but you will also be right there to reward the good behavior. After giving a positive reward, play with your puppy outside for a few minutes to avoid creating a negative connection with returning inside.

Don'ts of Potty Training a Puppy

You may have heard some conflicting advice on house training a puppy. Here's what you should NOT do.

Using Potty Pads With Crate Training

Puppy pee pads should not be used as a substitute for going outside, unless you have a special situation such as living in a high-rise apartment or have limited mobility. Allowing puppies to eliminate on potty pads inside the house can confuse your puppy about where they're allowed to eliminate. This may slow down the potty training process and should be avoided if possible.

Using Punishment Instead of Positive Reinforcement

Punishment is never an acceptable or successful training methodology. Outdated "training techniques" used to suggest hitting a dog with a newspaper or rubbing their face in their excrement to "teach them a lesson."

Dogs do not associate these behaviors with doing something wrong. Instead, punishment teaches your puppy to become fearful of their owners or other people who try to punish them. Remember that potty training takes patience and kindness!

Not Following a Schedule

Failing to adhere to a consistent potty break and feeding schedule can create confusion for your puppy, and therefore leads to more accidents in the house.

Having a puppy is a big responsibility, and it is the pet parents' job to stick with the schedule and constantly supervise your dog as you would a child. The more frequent trips outside, the better! The more often your puppy is allowed to successfully eliminate outside, the more quickly they will become potty trained!

