

Housetraining your New Dog or Puppy

Given the opportunity, dogs prefer to use the bathroom away from their living space. The key is to give them plenty of opportunities to go outside and supervise or confine them when they are inside. A crate is very useful for this process – for more info, see our handout on crate training. Here is a simple way to housetrain your new pet:

- Get on a routine. Feed the dog at the same times each day, and take them out at the same times each day. The dog should go outside for potty breaks at MINIMUM:
 - First thing in the morning
 - Last thing before bed
 - After each meal (we recommend feeding twice a day, but if you would like to feed more frequently, that's fine)
- Supervise the dog. If the dog is sniffing and walking in circles, this may be an indication that they need to go out.
- If you can't be there to supervise the dog, put them in the crate (see our handout on crate training).
- If the dog is going to be in the crate for a long period of time (4 or more hours), they should have a mid-day potty break.
- When taking the dog outside to use the bathroom, it's a good idea to have a specific potty area. Let the dog wander on leash in this area until they use the bathroom, paying not much attention to them. Once they do their business, praise them and give a treat.
- Accidents happen. If you catch your dog in the act, you can interrupt them by saying "outside!" in a bright voice and taking them out to the potty area. Avoid scaring the dog – the goal is to interrupt the behavior, not frighten or "punish" them.
- If you find poop or pee in the house, DO NOT PUNISH THE DOG. The dog will not understand what you are punishing them for, and they will learn to be scared of you.
- Dogs like to "go" in a spot that smells like it's already been soiled. Clean up with cleaners specifically designed for pet messes – this is important to eliminate the scent. Even if you can't smell it, your dog can!

Puppies have some extra needs when housetraining:

- Puppies will need to go out more frequently than adults. A general rule of thumb is that puppies can hold it for one hour for every month old they are (2 months = 2 hours, 3 months = 3 hours, etc.). In addition morning, night, and after-meal potty breaks, puppies should have potty breaks after playtime and after napping. Some very young puppies may also need to use the bathroom during the night.
- To make sure your puppy won't potty in the crate, the crate should be big enough for the puppy to stand up, turn around, and lie down comfortably. Any larger and they can use the bathroom at one end of the crate and sleep in the other. Any smaller, and it is very uncomfortable for the puppy. Some crates come with removable dividers to adjust the size of the crate.

With time, your dog or puppy will learn to use the bathroom outside. If you or your dog/puppy is struggling with this, give us a call.

APS Behavior Helpline

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