

Dog: House-Training Your Puppy



Puppies become house-trained at different speeds, depending on size and anatomy, and on how diligently you stick to the house-training routine. Allow anywhere from a few weeks to several months for your puppy to be fully house-trained.

House-Training Schedule

Take your puppy out:

- Very first thing in the morning
- After he eats
- After he wakes from a nap
- After he is done with a play session
- Right before bed time
- Note: Young puppies (eight to 10 weeks) usually need to go out at least once an hour

Four Golden Rules for House-Training

1. Until your puppy is perfectly house-trained, never leave him alone unless he's in the puppy playpen or crate. Supervise your puppy at all times in the house.
2. Take your puppy out on leash often, starting with half-hour intervals. Go to the same spot (or at least the same kind of surface) every time. Until your puppy is fully vaccinated, be sure to pick a spot other dogs haven't used!
3. If you see your puppy sniffing and circling in the house, take him out immediately.
4. Praise and reward with a treat when he goes outdoors. Keep this up for at least the first few weeks, then you can switch to just praising.

If Your Puppy Has an Accident

If you catch your puppy making a mistake. Interrupt your puppy without being too harsh ("Ah! Ah! Let's go outside!"), then hustle him to his bathroom area to finish. If he finishes there, praise and reward this. The important thing is to interrupt, not punish. Punishing your puppy for accidents can make him afraid to go in front of you, so he hides his mistakes by going behind couches or beds or in closets. He would also become less likely to go in front of you outside, making it impossible to praise him and to make him understand what you want him to do.

If your puppy makes a mistake while you are not there. Don't scold or punish your puppy. He won't make the connection with his accident—smacking him or rubbing his face in his own mess will just make him afraid of you. Only if you catch him in the act should you respond to his behavior.

Tip: Clean all accidents thoroughly with an enzymatic cleanser (e.g. Nature's Miracle®, Anti-Lcky-Poo®, Petastic®).

Going Forward

After two or three weeks with no accidents, give your puppy access to one extra room of the house and supervise closely. If your puppy is successful, add another room every two or three weeks.

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Starting at three months of age, gradually extend the duration between bathroom break outings—add one hour every week or two. If your puppy starts having accidents, back off and do more frequent outings for a couple of weeks, then try again.

If you are having trouble, call us (415.552.3500) or visit www.sfspca.org for our dog trainer referral list.