

Whether you bring home a new puppy or new adult dog, they will need to learn or possibly relearn when and where to eliminate.

Your Two Main Goals

When you start housetraining a dog, you'll need to focus on two things:

- preventing mistakes from happening
- providing plenty of opportunities for success (i.e., eliminating outside) and rewarding your dog every time he gets it right. If you carefully manage your dog's behavior inside your home from the very beginning and you make it very clear that you LOVE it when he goes to the bathroom outside by rewarding him generously with treats and praise, you'll have a housetrained dog before you know it.

The Crate

The easiest way to prevent your dog from making mistakes is to use a crate. Crates are great! Remember that dogs' ancestors lived in dens, so dogs do naturally tend to like small, cozy places to call their own. Unless they've been forced to live and eliminate in very small, confined spaces, most dogs will avoid urinating and defecating where they sleep, eat and hang out. So if you set up an appropriately sized crate for your new dog, he probably won't go to the bathroom when he's in it. When trying to determine how big a crate to buy, think cozy. It should be big enough to allow your dog to turn around, lie down and sit comfortably when he's inside it—but no bigger. Once you've set up your dog's crate and introduced him to it, you can make a new rule: When you can't keep your eyes on your dog to supervise him closely and make sure he doesn't eliminate in the house, he ALWAYS goes into his crate. Stick to this new rule religiously for at least a couple of weeks. Of course, make sure your dog gets frequent playtime with you outside of his crate.

A great time to do this is right after he's eliminated (and he's empty). Do make sure, however, that your dog doesn't ever have the freedom to wander around your home alone. Until you're sure your dog is housetrained, he should always be in the same room as you are, directly supervised, or in his crate. Whenever you let your dog out of his crate, immediately take him outside for a bathroom break. If he doesn't go and it's been a couple hours or more since he has, put him back into the crate and try again 30 minutes later. Eventually, your dog will eliminate outside and you'll have an opportunity to praise and reward him for doing so.

If you choose not to use a crate to housetrain, you'll need to set up a dog-proofed confinement area instead, where your dog can stay when you cannot supervise him. Make sure the area you choose is carpet-free, as small as possible and securely sectioned off from the rest of your house with doors, baby gates or an exercise pen.

How often does my puppy need to go?

You'll find some very general guidelines below. Keep in mind, however, that puppies are individuals, and some may develop bladder and bowel control more quickly than others. If your puppy's making mistakes in the house, she may not be physically able to hold it as long as you're asking her to.

- 8—12 weeks old: Your puppy will probably need to go out every 1—3 hours, but some may need to eliminate as often as a few times an hour until they develop bladder/bowel control.
- 12 weeks—6 months old: Your puppy will probably need to go out every 3—6 hours.
- 6 months old and up: Your puppy will probably need to go out every 6—8 hours.

It's helpful to know that puppies usually need to eliminate at certain times. Be sure to take yours out:

- immediately after waking in the morning, waking from naps and time in the crate
- 1—10 minutes after eating or drinking
- right after a vigorous play session
- right before bedtime

If you can't take your puppy out often enough, consider coming home from work during lunch, asking a friend or relative to let your puppy out for you or hiring a dog walker to come over while you're away. If no one is available to take your puppy out during the day, you'll need to leave her in a confined space with some newspaper or puppy pads.

How long should I leave my adult dog in the crate?

During the day, we recommend leaving your adult dog (6 months old and up) in his crate for a maximum of 6—8 hours. Overnight, most adult dogs can sleep without needing to eliminate for up to 8 hours.

What to Do If Your Dog Does Have an Accident in the House

Although you'll housetrain your dog more quickly if you can prevent mistakes from happening altogether, sometimes mistakes do happen. If your dog does eliminate in the house, here's what you need to do:

- First of all, make a mental note: Your dog may need more frequent opportunities to go out and relieve himself—and he may need more supervision too.
- If you catch your dog as he STARTS to make a mistake in the house, interrupt him by making some sort of noise (“Oops!! Let's go outside!!”) and immediately take him out. If he finishes outside, remember to praise him.
- Avoid frightening or punishing your dog. If you do, he may learn to avoid eliminating in front of you at all—and to sneak away whenever he has to go.
- If you don't catch your dog in the act (he's already gone to the bathroom in the house), it is too late to respond. DO NOT punish him by yelling or rubbing his nose in urine or feces. If you do this, your dog will not make the connection and understand that he shouldn't eliminate in the house. Just supervise more closely in the future.
- Clean up the accident with an enzymatic cleaner, like Nature's Miracle, which you can find at almost any pet store. If you use something else to clean up the mess, your dog's powerful nose will still be able to smell the spot later on—and that may cue him to eliminate there again.

Send a Clear Message with Rewards

Along with preventing your dog from eliminating where you don't want him to, you'll need to clearly explain to him where you DO want him to go. Rewarding him with lots of praise and treats when he gets it right is the best way to accomplish this. To avoid interrupting your dog as he's eliminating, praise him calmly when he starts to go. Then praise enthusiastically and reward him with a tasty treat right after he finishes. Do this for at least a couple of weeks or until your dog is completely housetrained. Once he has been totally housetrained for about a month, you can stop delivering treats and just praise him instead.