

house training and crate training

dog training basics

House training a new dog or puppy can seem like a daunting task to new pet parents. But understanding your options and the reasons behind the training can go a long way toward ensuring a positive outcome.

Potty pads

Advantages:

Your puppy or dog learns to eliminate on potty pads. Portable, used indoors, doesn't require going outside on very cold or very hot days or during inclement weather.

Disadvantages:

If you plan on training your dog to go outside eventually, this adds another step. Dog may view any pads lying on the floor as fair game.

Litter box

Advantages:

Your puppy or dog learns to use a size-appropriate litter box. Portable, used indoors, doesn't require going outside on very cold or very hot days or during inclement weather, dog doesn't have to wait for someone to let them outside.

Disadvantages:

Daily cleaning of litter box.

Crate-training

Advantages:

Your puppy or dog learns to eliminate outside, using a crate for confinement when not being actively supervised. No intermediary steps, uses dog's natural instincts to control bathroom habits, gives the dog a safe and secure place to call their own.

Disadvantages:

Must go outside regardless of weather or time of day or night, dog must wait until pet parent can take them outside.



Developed with and approved by a qualified veterinarian.

Background Information:

Dogs' instinct encourages them to keep their living area clean by eliminating somewhere outside of their sleeping place. Because both urine and feces have strong scents, this scent in or around their living area can either keep other dogs away or attract them. It is this instinct that allows for house training.

Keeping your dog or puppy on a consistent schedule for eating, drinking and potty breaks will go a long way toward establishing good bathroom habits. Puppies should be given the chance to eliminate within 15 minutes of eating, drinking, waking or play sessions.

Puppies may not be developed enough physically to completely control their bladder and bowels until they are at least 4 months of age. House training can and should begin before that, but don't expect total control until you have created a routine with your puppy.

Some breeds, especially certain toy breeds, may take more energy and effort to house-train than others. Patience and persistence are always important. Seemingly stubborn cases may actually be the result of a medical condition. Always speak with your veterinarian if you are having difficulty house training your dog, or if a normally trustworthy dog starts having accidents. If an area smells like a bathroom to a dog, it is a bathroom. Always clean house-training mistakes with an enzymatic cleaner to reduce the chance of repeats.

Pad Training:

Choose a confined location such as a bathroom or utility room. Cover the floor completely with potty pads. Place the puppy's bed in one corner of the room. Instinct will probably cause the puppy to go to the bathroom in a spot as far away from the bed as possible.

Once the puppy is eliminating consistently in the same general area, slowly begin removing the pads closest to the bed. Change the remaining papers frequently, but place a small piece of the soiled pad on top of the clean pad in the area you want them to eliminate. Continue until you have removed all but one or two pads. If they eliminate on bare floor at any time, clean the area with an enzymatic cleaner and re-cover the area in pads.

Once your puppy is consistently using one or two pads, you can begin to slowly widen the area the puppy is confined in. Increase the padded area if accidents occur.

Crate training:

While many people cringe at the thought of placing their new dog or puppy in a "cage," crate training is, in fact, a natural and relatively comfortable experience for the dog. Dogs being den animals, feel safe and secure in small, confined areas. A crate is simply an artificial den. It makes house training much easier and protects your dog and home when you are not able to closely supervise your new companion.

Selecting a crate:

Your dog should be able to stand up, turn around and lie down in the crate. For puppies, it is important that the crate not be big enough to allow the puppy to eliminate in one corner and sleep in another. If you wish to buy a crate that will fit your puppy when full grown, simply block off the back of it with a crate divider or a large box so you restrict the total floor space available to your puppy.

Wire crates often fold for storage, but they may be heavy.

Plastic kennels may be warmer inside and many are airline-approved. Although lightweight, they are bulky to store.

Training:

Although instinct encourages them to seek out a den, your dog may not immediately fall in love with a new kennel. Introduce it gradually, throwing a treat into the crate and allowing your dog to go in, eat it and come right back out. Praise your dog each time they enter their crate. Feed them in their crate. Don't close the door until your dog seems very comfortable. Then, open it immediately. Gradually increase the length of time the door is closed.

Once your dog is used to the crate, allow them to spend longer periods in it while you stay nearby. Never open the door of the crate while your dog is whining, barking, scratching or doing anything you don't want to encourage. Do not praise your dog when you let them out.

Never use the crate for punishment or drag your dog over to it. Never allow children to

tease your crated dog, bang on the crate or enter the crate with your dog. This is your dog's private space. Teach children to respect it as such.

With your dog safely kenneled, you can begin routine house training. Any time you cannot actively supervise your pet, place them in the crate with a toy stuffed with treats or some other fun, safe toy. Each time you take your dog out of the kennel, take your dog straight outdoors or to the litter box. Some pet parents have found that using a potty cue such as "Go potty" or "Get busy" further helps house train their dog. Keep your dog on their leash and do not play with them until they have done their business. Praise your dog profusely, then play.

Anytime you see your dog sniffing and circling, chances are good that they need to go to their relief spot. If you catch your dog in the act of squatting in an inappropriate location, pick them up. This will often stop the elimination long enough for you to get them to the proper spot. Then praise, praise, praise when your dog finishes there.

Punishing the dog after the fact will not help with house training. It will teach your dog to fear you and see you as unpredictable. Rubbing their nose in accidents will only teach them to leave the scene as quickly as possible and to eliminate where you can't see them.

Litter boxes:

Training your dog to use a litter box is much easier if you combine it with crate training. Keep the box clean, but leave a small amount of soiled litter to encourage the dog to return to the box. Make sure the box is large enough for the dog to circle in.

Note: The information on this Care Sheet is not a substitute for veterinary care. If you need additional information, please contact your veterinarian.