



The secret to houstraining your puppy

An article by dvm360 in association with Kathryn Primm, DVM, and modified for Evergreen Veterinary Hospital

Here is the good news: your dog is wired to make houstraining possible. However, it is up to you to set them up for success. Wild canines bed down in a den together with their mom. When they are very young their mom cleans up after them, but as they grow, the brain matures to instinctively resist soiling the den. After all, cleaning up after six to eight pups can be daunting! Humans can take advantage of this tendency and use it as a tool to teach puppies when and where to eliminate.

A place to call home

Simulate a “den” experience for your puppy with a crate or safe zone. Keep in mind that it should be small enough to recognize that it is a den, but not too small that it is uncomfortable. Make it a happy place with special toys, treats and even meals. Whenever you cannot be there to supervise, they should be safe in their happy place.

Frequent outings

Puppies cannot typically hold their bladders for extended periods of time, so make accommodations for them to go outside regularly and as often as you can. Whenever they eliminate outside, reward right away with praise and treats. It may help to take them to the same place every time until they associate that spot with voiding.

A predictable outcome

Your puppy’s elimination can be predictable – as long as you help!

- Do not leave food out for around-the-clock snacking.
- Practice mealtimes and make sure you will be available for a walk about 10-15 minutes later. A full stomach can trigger the bowel to empty, and you can reinforce this tendency with rewards and praise.
- Make sure you can be counted on, too. Do not leave your puppy alone in the crate for longer than they can “hold it”. Every time they are forced to soil the crate, their brains learn the wrong message.



Punishment is a no-no

Never strike your puppy or rub their nose in an accident. They cannot sort out the fear of your handling from what you are trying to convey, so instead they learn to fear *you* when you become upset. If you see them start to posture for elimination, simply bring them outside to the elimination spot and reward them when they finish eliminating.

Accidents will happen

Clean up mishaps with an enzymatic cleaner to keep your puppy from going back to that spot. Do not depend on the pup to warn you of an impending incident; just take them out every two hours or so. Eventually, they will learn to let you know when they need to go. Hang in there! Remember, the idea of selective elimination is natural.

If you are being consistent and still cannot seem to housetrain your puppy, do not hesitate to ask the Evergreen Veterinary Team. We can make sure there are no medical causes for the problem and offer more tips!