

Puppy potty training is one of the first things you'll do to help your dog get acquainted with his new home, and there are many ways to go about it. Try these seven suggestions to set you and your canine up for success.

## 1. Stick to a Potty Spot

Before you begin puppy potty training your new pal, decide where you'd like them to "go" outside of the house. Do you have a yard? Direct them to a location that's quick to get to from the door. Apartment-dwelling dogs should also be able to identify natural, easy-to-reach ground that isn't in the way of foot traffic or cars.

Once you've determined where you'll bring your dog during this training phase, make sure you take them to the same area every time they go outside to do their business. Dogs can smell their territory, so consistency is important when you [house train a puppy](#).

## 2. Learn the Signs of Needing to Go

Your new puppy might not speak the same language as you, but they'll try to tell you they need to eliminate in their own special way. Luckily, you can look out for certain signs. Immediately bring your dog outside to their special potty spot when you see them:



- Smelling his rear
- Pacing in circles
- Barking or scratching at the door
- Sniffing the floor
- Squatting.

By the time your dog shows the last sign on the list, it may be a bit too late. Be ready to open the door anyway, so they'll know that their usual area is up for grabs before they go in the wrong place.

You'll need to quickly bring your dog outside when you see any of these signs, so plan ahead. Keep a leash right at the door, allowing you to usher them outside as soon as possible. Remember to guide your dog to the same spot every time they need to go. Once they learn where their special potty area is, they'll return to it all on their own.

### **3. Make Meal Time the Same Time**

When house training a puppy, keep all meal and snack times scheduled. This is helpful for two reasons: First, scheduled meals will teach your dog when they can expect to eat throughout the day. Second, if you're feeding your dog at specific times, you can follow up and bring them to their potty spot with the expectation that they'll be ready to go soon after they finish eating.

### **4. Watch the Water Bowl**

If your dog is a heavy water drinker, chances are they'll urinate frequently as well. To rule out any accidents, take your puppy out shortly after drinking during the puppy potty training phase, so they're in the right place at the right time.

### **5. Go Outside Often**

Take your pup out first thing in the morning, after all feedings and anytime you see cues that they might need to go. Many dogs produce a bowel movement within 30 minutes of a meal. If you have a young puppy, take them out every hour to avoid accidents until you get a better idea of how often they do their business. Here are some general rules about how long puppies can "hold it" based on their age:

- 2-month-old pups must potty every two hours
- 3-month-olds can wait four hours
- 4-month-olds need a break after five hours
- 5-month-olds can hold it for about six hours

Big breeds have a greater capacity to wait while tiny breeds with smaller bladders may need more frequent potty breaks. By seven months of age, most dogs can wait seven or more hours. By that age, they should have learned to tell you when they need to go outside. Always give your dog a break before you go to sleep so they won't wake you at 3 a.m. or surprise you with a morning deposit.

## 6. Praise Them

Everyone likes to know when they're doing a good job, and your puppy will thrive on this [positive reinforcement](#). It doesn't matter if you praise them with treats or say "good job" while petting them. Just make sure they know you appreciate their efforts to do things the right way. Consider naming the deed to teach a "go to the bathroom" command. You may prompt your pup to "take a break," for example, before getting to play.

## 7. Use a Crate

Pups don't like to eliminate near where they sleep or eat. Use that to reinforce house training by [crate training your pup](#). A puppy can eliminate in one corner of a bathroom or laundry room and sleep and play in the rest of the space with no problem. If you can't watch your baby dog while on the phone or checking your email, confine them in their crate instead. They won't want to mess up this area and will let you know if they need a bathroom break. If they go outside and play without getting productive, put them back in the crate when you return. Should they mess up the crate, they must live with it temporarily — a powerful lesson every pup should learn.

## 8. Calmly Address Accidents

Accidents are a natural part of house training. When your dog eliminates in your home, calmly redirect them outside into their designated potty spot right away. Punishing a pup may make the situation worse and result in more accidents in the home.

Immediately clean the area. Avoid ammonia, since it mimics the smell of urine. Bleach disinfects but won't eliminate odor, either. If your dog smells waste in your home, they'll likely relieve themselves there in the future. When [cleaning the soiled spot](#), use an enzymatic cleaner or odor neutralizer designed specifically for pet waste. Keep your pup away from the area while it dries.

## 9. Preparing for Varying Situations

Puppies may squat when meeting new people or pets out of excitement or deference. Give them potty breaks before meet-and-greets to avoid a mess. Schedule plenty of potty breaks during road trips, too. If you decide to leave your dog behind when you travel, provide step-by-step instructions to the [boarding facility](#) to maintain consistency. If you move to a new home, start over with house training. Restrict them to one area of the house, show them the new potty spot and reward them when they do the right thing.

Many [dogs dislike eliminating when it rains](#) or object to squatting in snow. First experiences with cold and rainy weather can scare a pup, but even adult dogs prefer to potty in comfort. Keep an umbrella handy to offer some weather protection. Shovel out a path to your pup's preferred potty spot so they can relieve themselves without exposing their tail to the icy cold ground. Double up on the treats so they know going potty in bad weather gets extra rewards. This will help prevent unwelcome surprises under the piano bench. Excited, stressed or scared dogs are also more prone to accidents in the home, even if they're the best-trained dog. Any time your [house-trained dog has several accidents](#), check with your veterinarian to rule out any health issues.

Not all dogs learn at the same speed. Some puppies understand house training and become pros by eight or 10 weeks of age. Other pups, such as toy breed puppies, take longer to understand what you expect and may not demonstrate consistency until they're a few months old. In most cases, with your patience, praise and consistency, all dogs can learn to eliminate in an approved location.

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