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Housetraining Puppies

Puppies don’t automatically know the difference between “inside” and “outside” and it can take time for them to learn how to signal when they need out. Follow these tips for successful housetraining.

Potty Schedule

Setting a consistent schedule for your puppy will make housetraining much easier. All puppies will usually need a potty break at the following times:

1. As soon as they wake up in the morning
2. 5-15 minutes after breakfast
3. As soon as they wake up from a nap
4. 5-15 minutes after dinner
5. Before bed

Puppies usually need a potty break every hour per month of age. A 3 month-old puppy will need a break every 3 hours and a 5 month-old puppy will need a break every 5 hours. Some puppies can sleep without a break at night, while others may need a break in the beginning.

Another time that puppies might have to go is during or after a play session. If they’ve been hanging out with you and suddenly start sniffing the area where they’ve just been playing, that’s a sign they need to go out ASAP!

Accident Zones

Most puppies avoid soiling the spaces where they eat, sleep, and play. This is why accidents often happen in less used areas like hallways. Use baby gates and closed doors to keep your puppy out of these accident zones until their housetraining is more reliable.

Confinement Area

When you’re not able to supervise your puppy, they will need an area where they can stay out of trouble. This area should be large enough to hold their bed bed or crate, water, toys, and puppy pads or a puppy litter box. All puppies will need to be introduced to this area gradually. Start by feeding them their meals and stuffed Kongs™ in this area only.

Troubleshooting

If you have a puppy that won’t “go” outside, but has an accident shortly after they come back in the house, you may need to take additional steps.

When you return inside, keep the puppy with you on leash or in their confinement area. Wait 15 minutes, then head outside again. Repeat the process until they relieve themselves. Now they can be loose inside again (but still keep those lesser-used areas closed off)!

Accidents Happen!

Your puppy has been doing great for months, when suddenly you find a mess.  Everyone makes mistakes when they are first learning! But if you see repeated accidents, something’s gone wrong.

First, rule out health problems. If your puppy isn’t feeling well, they can’t follow a normal routine. If you suspect a health problem, contact their veterinarian. Now, go back to the beginning of your plan. You will probably find where you made a mistake. Go back to your normal routine and they’ll be back on track in no time.

If your puppy is repeatedly having accidents in the same spot, this has become an accident zone. Block their access to the area and clean it well. You can also spend more time playing with your puppy and even feeding them in that area so they are less likely to soil that space.

Sometimes tracking your puppy’s accidents can help you spot a pattern so you can change their routine to prevent future problems.

Cleaning Up

Use an oxidized cleaner for accidents. For urine, make sure you allow the cleaner to soak through to the pad. Don’t hesitate to get your carpets professionally cleaned, since this can remove the odors that may draw your puppy back to those areas.

Punishment

Punishing puppies for accidents - either in the moment or after the fact - doesn’t teach puppies not to relieve themselves inside. It can even make housetraining much harder.