

Housetraining- During your dog's waking hours, take her outdoors on a schedule. How often she needs to go out depends on her age. Even young puppies can be expected to "hold it" for at least a short period of time. As a general rule, that can translate to one hour for each month of age, give or take an hour. For example, your 3-month old puppy might resist urination for three to four hours. Assume that puppies may need to eliminate after eating, naps, strenuous play, or whenever there is a change of activity. Adult dogs should be given an opportunity to go out about every four hours when possible, but can reasonably be expected, once trained, to hold their urine for 8 hours or longer.

- **You should take your dog to the same place to eliminate every time.** Not only will your dog make a visual association with that location and the reason why they are being taken there, but in time there will also be an olfactory cue (odor) as well. Dogs generally like to eliminate where they have done so before. Unless your dog has already shown a preference for eliminating in a certain spot, choose a potty area to your liking. Chances are that even after your dog is housetrained and going out on her own, she will continue to use this spot. If you do not have a yard and need to walk your dog to relieve herself, consider establishing a toilet area directly adjacent to your home. Take your dog to the toilet area as soon as you exit the house, and remain there until the dog urinates and defecates.
- **To teach your dog to eventually signal to you** when she needs to go out, you should always take her out and back in through the same exit door. However, it is important to be aware that not all dogs learn automatically to signal the need to eliminate, in a way that their owners understand (such as by barking or scratching at a door).

Principle #1

As your dog finishes eliminating (but not before she has finished), immediately praise her verbally and give her an extra special food treat. In order for your dog to understand that the treat is for the elimination behavior, it must be delivered immediately following that behavior. Always take your dog out to eliminate on a leash during the housetraining process in order to be able to deliver her reward in a timely manner.

It may also be helpful to withhold a play session or walk until after your dog has eliminated, so that she learns that eliminating must always occur before other fun activities begin. If you reward both generously with high value food treats and with a walk, the walk actually becomes a reward for elimination. This way, you do not need to walk with your dog for an indeterminate length of time until she eliminates, thereby allowing the dog to set the length of the walk. It's easiest to establish this routine at times when you know your dog really has to go, like first thing in the morning and when you return home from work. Urination may be easier to train in this way than defecation, as some dogs need to move around in order to defecate (e.g., walk a little bit), and some do not defecate at regular times (e.g., once in the morning and once in the evening, every day).

Principal #2

Avoid allowing your dog to make mistakes by:

1. taking your dog out with adequate frequency (see above),
2. taking her out on a regular schedule, and
3. directly supervising or confining her when she can't be outdoors.

Unless your dog was previously confined for long periods in dirty living conditions, she will naturally tend to avoid eliminating in places where she must sleep or eat. This instinct is important when it comes to housetraining and one of the reasons why the use of a crate as well as other long-term confinement areas can be helpful, especially for puppies.

Use of a crate to aid in housetraining: see crate training section

To paper train or not to paper train: To ease cleanup and to train your dog to urinate and defecate on a specific surface, you may place newspapers or wee-wee pads in the previously soiled area. The dog can then be rewarded for eliminating on these surfaces. She will eventually need to be taught to make the transition from eliminating on the papers or pads to voiding outside, on grass, dirt, mulch, etc. It is important to remember that the dog will not necessarily make this change easily (particularly if the weather, etc., make it more comfortable to eliminate indoors). The use of newspapers, so-called paper training, can be avoided altogether if you can take your dog outdoors frequently from the beginning.

Dirty Dog Syndrome: If your dog had been closely confined in the past for longer than she was able to hold her urine and feces, you may not be able to use a crate for housetraining. Dogs forced to eliminate where they eat and sleep tend to adapt to those living conditions, usually making housetraining a more difficult proposition. In this situation, you may need to tether your dog to you with a light line about 6 feet in length ("umbilical cord"), to keep her close to you so that you will be alerted by her preparations to eliminate (e.g., sniffing, circling, squatting), and be able to distract her and take her outside immediately. If this is not feasible, the dog can be confined with you wherever you are. You will have to be alert to the above behaviors. The idea is to prevent her from eliminating "in private" in another part of the house. Some dogs who have been scolded or punished for eliminating indoors in their owner's presence will avoid eliminating if any person is present. It can be a challenge to convince such dogs that it is "safe" and desirable to eliminate when you take them outside; they may resist eliminating until they can get away from you, even for a short time. You may also leave your dog in a larger area such as the long-term confinement area mentioned under crate-training when you cannot supervise her.