

Housetraining Puppies & Dogs

Are you dealing with a pooping puppy? Or a urinating Yorkie? Don't give up on Fido just yet! Here are some ways you can deal with your housetraining woes:

1. Schedule a veterinary exam

- If your dog suddenly begins having “accidents” or if you have been unsuccessful at housetraining, contact a veterinarian right away. Resolving health issues may resolve the problem.
- Intact males may be marking, in which case neutering can help significantly (not to mention the added [health benefits of neutering](#)).

2. Understand normal dog behavior

- Never rub a dog's nose in urine or feces, or punish a dog for an “accident.” This will teach your dog to fear you, and he may hide when he has to “go.”
- It is not instinctive for dogs to relieve themselves outside; it is only natural for them to not go where they sleep. Everyplace else is fair game!
- You must be patient. Regardless of whether you have a puppy or have recently adopted an adult, the dog will not automatically understand the routine in your house or know where the door is. It is up to you to train your dog.

3. Get started

- Recommended reading: [Way to Go! How to Housetrain a Dog of Any Age](#) by Karen London and Patricia McConnell
- Decide on a special treat that your puppy/dog will only get when after pooping or peeing outside.
 - Keep the treats handy (near the door) every single time you take the dog out.
 - Treats should be small (about the size of your pinky fingernail), and you will need at least three to five treats for each potty break.

4. Schedule your dog's feedings

- Always feed by schedule, rather than free feeding. Eating all day = pooping all day!
- Get your dog on scheduled feedings:
 - Your veterinarian can help you determine the appropriate amount of food your dog needs and the number of feedings per day.
 - Remove any uneaten food after 20 minutes.
 - Do not offer the dog more food until the next scheduled meal.
 - Stick to it! The dog should be eating on schedule within one to four meals.

5. Clean up messes thoroughly

- Dogs are attracted to return to spots where they urinated/defecated previously.
- If you clean up just a little, the dog will be attracted to “refresh” the spot. If you clean thoroughly, there will be no attraction to go there again.
- Pet urine is very difficult to get out, and standard household cleansers don't cut it.
- Rent or hire a carpet cleaner with special pet-urine enzymatic cleaner or use an enzymatic cleaner, such as Nature's Miracle or Simple Solution, found in most pet supply stores or online.

Cleaning protocol:

1. Saturate any dried spots with lukewarm water.
2. Press the area with paper towels until there is no more moisture.
3. Follow the instructions on the container, but repeat three times.

6. Use chemical attraction to your advantage

- Do not throw away any “accidents” since dogs are attracted to go in the same places over and over. Let’s use this to our advantage!
- First, pick up any indoor “accidents” and bring them outside to the potty area.
 - Put the poop right onto the ground, or secure the material used to wipe up urine to the ground with a rock or stick.
 - These “triggers” can be removed after the pet has “pottied” in the area.
 - When they do poop outside, leave the most recent poop in place to encourage your dog to go again in that area.
 - After each new poop has been left in that area, you can clean up any previous poop.
- Be sure to go back inside the house and immediately clean any soiled areas according to the instructions in step 5.

7. Supervise your dog

- You must see everything that comes out of the dog so you can interrupt inside “accidents” and reward outside potties.
- If you notice a mess after it has happened, you are not supervising closely enough.
- Watch for sniffing, squatting, circling or tail out straight -- and take the dog out immediately.
- If the dog begins to poop/pee inside:
- Immediately interrupt him by clapping and saying “Ah ah!”
- Get the dog outside as soon as possible (carry him whenever possible and put the leash on the dog as you head to the door).
- You must be with the dog outside so as to praise him; simply letting him out and shutting the door is not enough.
- Once you are outside, take the dog right to the area where you want him to “go.”
 1. Walk back and forth or around in little circles.
 2. Do not play or converse with the dog until he goes (this may take some time, but be patient).
 3. When the dog begins to go, quietly whisper a command you plan to eventually use to tell him to “go,” such as: go potty, get busy, do your business, etc.
 4. Quietly praise him and get that special treat ready.
 5. As soon as the poop/pee is complete, immediately praise him, quickly give him several treats and then play.
 6. Now your dog gets to do whatever he wants (go for a walk, run back inside, etc.).

8. Schedule potty breaks

- Take the dog out at regular, predictable intervals.
- The frequency of potty breaks depends on age, breed and previous training (anywhere from every 10 minutes to once an hour).
 - Set a watch alarm or timer to remind you of potty breaks.
- Stick to the intervals until the dog is successful for several days.
- Slowly increase the amount of time between intervals only if the dog succeeds.
- As he succeeds, gradually allow more and more freedom inside the home.
- If you see accidents, go back to more frequent potty breaks, increase supervision and reduce freedom inside.

Housetraining Troubleshooting

You take the dog out, but nothing happens.

- Be patient. If nothing happens after 10 minutes or so, come back in, keep the dog on leash and go back out 10 to 15 minutes later. Repeat as needed.

You take the dog out, but she runs around and plays.

- Make sure she is on a leash about 6 feet long.
- Make sure there are no play triggers around, such as toys, pets, children, etc.
- Ignore the dog. Don't talk to or play with her, don't yell at her and don't point out any poop.
- Just walk back and forth, and don't make a big deal about anything. Dogs can be easily distracted and love to get attention, so if you give her attention, she'll never figure it out!

You keep finding accidents.

- You are not supervising properly.

The dog has accidents inside the crate.

- If the crate is too large, the dog can have a potty area and a sleeping area, so make sure the crate is the right size. The dog should be able to comfortably stand up, turn around and lie down.
- If your dog goes to the bathroom and gets it all over himself, take the dog to the vet to rule out medical problems.
- If medical issues are ruled out, contact a trainer or behaviorist for advice.
- Do your best to determine if the dog was kept for long periods of time in a cage where it was forced to urinate and defecate where it sleeps. This makes housetraining more difficult, and advice from a professional may be required.

Your dog cries in the crate in the middle of the night.

- Your dog may be telling you he has to go to the bathroom, or he may be begging for attention.
- Check your journal to see if it is time for a break.
- If you're not sure, take him directly outside, but do not acknowledge him.
- If he goes to the bathroom, quietly and briefly acknowledge him to avoid teaching your dog that midnight potties are fun.
- If he doesn't go to the bathroom, put him back into the crate and go back to bed.
- Make sure your dog has been adequately exercised before crating him for the night.
- If you are certain the dog isn't full of energy, doesn't have to go to the bathroom and is healthy, he may need to just cry it out.
- If the dog seems to be panicking, digging, destroying bedding, etc., contact a behaviorist or trainer right away, as you may be dealing with [separation anxiety](#).

You just can't seem to keep an eye on the dog.

- Keep the dog tethered to you at all times or gate him in an area with you.
- Restrict home access with gates and closed doors.
- If you can't keep your eye on her, she should be crated (such as at night, when you are gone, etc.).
- Do not let the crate become a substitute for training! Dogs need plenty of exercise and social interaction.