

# Potty Training Program

Potty training is the most important thing you will do when you bring home a new puppy. Here is a step-by-step guide to accomplish this quickly and effectively. After a puppy eats, drinks, plays, sleeps, or chews, he must soon go potty.

- Up to 6 months of age, at least 12 times per day.
- From 6–12 months of age, at least 8 times per day.

Take your puppy out to relieve him or herself as many times a day as you can. Every two hours would be ideal. The more he does his business outside, the more it will become ingrained that outside is the proper place. Always use a leash when you take your puppy out to potty. If you are using a crate, which I strongly suggest, remove your puppy from the crate, pick him up, clip on his leash, and carry him outside. In the beginning, always pick him up and carry him outside. Do not allow him to walk, because he may have an accident on the way. Place him in the grass in your designated area and repeat **“go potty.”**

There should be no excess talking or playing. **This is not play time or walk time.** This is **potty time.** Stay in a small area of the yard and let your puppy have as much of his 6-foot leash as he wants. Continue repeating his name and **“go potty.”** When the mission is accomplished, reward your dog with a treat and a **“good boy.”** (ALWAYS HAVE TREATS IN YOUR POCKET.) Bring your dog back in the house and allow on leash free time tethered to you. If he did not go potty within five minutes, return him to his crate and try again in 15 minutes or so. If he did go potty (**both kinds**), go back inside and keep your pup with you as you prepare for your day. Keep him on his leash at all times while he is potty training. Your puppy should **NEVER** be unsupervised.

Regulate feeding times and amount of food. I recommend feeding twice per day for pups under a year old. Manufacturers are likely to recommend more food than necessary. The faster you empty a bag, the faster they can sell you more. So, feed a little less than the bag says. **Over-feeding your dog will only make potty training more difficult.** Divide the daily portion in half, and feed once in the morning and once in the evening before 7 p.m. Give small amounts of water throughout the course of the day. Too much water means too much peeing.

Leave your dog's food on the floor no more than 15 minutes. **If your dog does not finish his food, pick up the bowl, and do not feed again until the next scheduled time.**

Leaving food and water out all day and allowing constant access is setting your dog up to fail and makes it more difficult to predict when your dog will need to potty. Watch your dog for signs that he needs to go potty. Tracking, sniffing, and circling are signs that a trip outside might be in order. Learn to recognize the signs, and get your dog outside BEFORE he has an accident in the house.

Feed your dog a high-quality dog food. The less expensive brands are loaded with fillers and chemicals that are hard to digest which can lead to inconsistent stools and lack of

ability to hold it until he gets outside. Many of the well-known national brands contain ingredients which dogs cannot digest, such as corn, chicken by-products, (heads, feet feathers, beaks,) wheat, white rice, and other things I do not like to feed my dogs. Do not change dog food all at once. If you do change foods, do it gradually, mixing 75% old with 25% new for a week, 50% of each for a week, then 75% new with 25% old for a week, and finally 100% new.

Do not feed **“people food”** to your dog as a steady diet. You can use it as an occasional training treat. A dog’s digestive system functions very differently than ours, and the vitamins, minerals, and enzymes that your dog needs will not be supplied.

Be aware, and keep track of, when your dog relieves himself (i.e., after meals, playtime, or waking from a nap), so you can develop the pattern and timeline that your puppy follows. All dogs will differ somewhat in their potty habits.

### **Crate training**

I recommend the use of a crate when potty training unless your puppy is going to be left alone all day while you’re at work, then a penned area with a potty pad may be best. I don’t really like potty pads, but you can not leave a puppy in a crate for 9 or 10 hours while you’re at work. A young puppy can not be expected to hold it that long until they’re at least 6 months old.

Teaching your puppy to like his crate should be done as soon as you get him home. Do not force your dog into the crate or he will view it as punishment. **Don’t ever use a crate as punishment.** Dogs should love their crates as their own personal safe haven. They should feel as though they are in a protective cave. The crate should be viewed by your dog as a good place to be. This will also help curb separation anxiety.

To get your puppy use to his crate, open the crate door all the way. Use a treat to lure him into the crate. Start by setting the treat just outside the door of the crate. Gradually move it inside the front edge and allow dog to get it and retreat. Place it further and further toward the back of the crate each time. When he goes into the crate voluntarily, say “good boy”. Then allow him to leave the crate on his own. Repeat this process several times. Do this until he moves freely in and out of the crate. Now lure your puppy into the crate. Praise him, then close the door and wait five seconds.

Open the door and invite your dog to come out. This is very important. Your dog must wait until he is invited out. A slight touch to his chest and the word “wait” should do it. Repeat this process. Start with very short increments of time, and increase the length of time in the crate gradually.

Remember, **never force your dog into the crate**, or he will view it as punishment. We want him to have positive experiences going in and out of the crate. Put a toy and an old t-shirt or towel with your scent on it in the crate. This will also convey to your puppy that the crate is a good place to be. You will find that in a short time your dog will go in his crate voluntarily even when you are not paying attention to him. Never leave the dog in the crate for excessive periods of time:

- 2-3 hours if puppy is under three months of age;

- 4-5 hours from 3-4 months of age;
- 6-7 hours from 4-6 months of age; and,
- 8 or more hours when puppy is over 6 months old.

These estimates vary by breed, size of dog, and accomplishments thus far.

If you work all day and are going to leave your puppy alone for several hours, crating him may not be the best option since that is **too many hours** to be confined to a crate.

Instead, consider a small area such as a bathroom, laundry room, or a small portion of whatever room you choose to limit your puppy's space. The use of a pee pad may be necessary when using a pen. I recommend an adjustable heavy duty plastic pen sold at most pet stores. Each section is about two feet wide, and there are usually 6 sections. This allows you to increase the size of the pen as your dog grows. Adjust the size of the pen so there is room for a blanket or bed at one end, and a pee pad at the other, with no room in between. Too much space may cause him to miss the pad.

If he is hitting the pad regularly, gradually increase the size of the pen. Eventually, you can give your dog more freedom by allowing him a larger area, being sure to leave the potty pad accessible. If possible, position the pad in front of the door most often used to go outside. Give your dog something to chew on to occupy his time and burn some energy when confined in his pen.

When your puppy is not in his pen or crate, **constant supervision is critical**. Always keep your puppy on a leash and tethered to you inside the house so he does not wander off and potty without being noticed. This also helps the puppy become accustomed to wearing the leash so he does not fear or dread it.

If your puppy starts to squat, pick him up quickly saying "no," and carry him outside, set him in the grass with the leash on, and say "go potty." Give him a minute to re-focus. Say "go potty." When your puppy is finished, give a treat and praise him. Bring the puppy directly back in the house. Allow 30-45 minutes of supervised out of the crate time attached to a leash. Then return the puppy to his crate or pen for approximately 1 to 2 hours, and repeat the process several times a day. If you need to leave the house, always return the puppy to the crate or pen.

**If your puppy completes his urination or defecation in the house and you do not catch him in the act, do not bother disciplining him. It is too late at this point.** After just a few seconds, he will not know why you are scolding him. There should be no yelling, no rubbing his nose in it, and no hitting. You will only confuse him and make matters worse. Just clean it up and move on.

Be sure to clean with the correct products to remove any scent that your dog may be tempted to return to in the future. Several are sold in pet stores. Be sure that you do not clean with anything containing ammonia, because the smell of ammonia will attract the puppy back to that spot for a repeat performance. There are some cleaners you can make from household products you probably already have under the sink. Check online for the formula. Just google, **home remedies for urine stains**.

Teething may cause your puppy to make mistakes in the house. The discomfort in his mouth may trigger irregular urination. Be patient during this time—it will pass. Before

you go to bed at night, take the time to play with your puppy to burn off some energy. Take him out one last time to potty, and then put him in the crate or pen for the night. You may want to keep the crate in the bedroom with you so that the puppy can see and hear you and feels like he is still part of the pack. First thing each morning, remove him from the crate or pen, pick him up, and carry him outside. The first few weeks, the puppy may wake you very early (4 or 5 a.m.). As he grows, he will sleep longer and be able to hold himself for longer periods of time. Most of all, be patient and consistent! Call me if you have questions: 321-689-6725.

Best of luck!!

– Paul Pipitone, *Dog's Best Friend of Central Florida*