



Tompkins County SPCA

Dog Care Series

Housetraining

You will need:

- A crate only large enough for the dog to stand up and turn around comfortably in
- Schedule for going outside
- Treats for whenever you go outside with the dog
- Good observing skills to prevent accidents
- Patience

A) Crate

The dog/puppy must be crated whenever you're away or can't actively supervise (e.g., when you're busy around the house, sleeping, etc.) This will make him hold on so that you can have a success outside later. If you find the dog/puppy is soiling his crate, the likelihood is that the crate is too large: she can use part of it as a toilet OR she is being kept in the crate too long.

B) Schedule

You must provide the dog/puppy with a set schedule for eating and for going outside. If you are away for longer than 4 hours, have someone come to the house to take him out. Optimally, there is always someone at home during the housetraining period.

A typical schedule looks like this:

1. First thing in the morning
2. A few minutes after each meal. This is often when dogs/puppies will have to poop. You will discover your own pet's rhythm.
3. For puppies: every hour on the hour. Take the puppy outside on leash for five minutes in a small area. Always return to the same spot so he begins to associate the area with its purpose. Don't interact with the puppy. Have a play period once he is finished. If nothing happens after five minutes, bring him back into the house and crate him for another thirty minutes. Then try again. If he does eliminate, he may have a free period in the kitchen or confinement area, or, better yet, a nice walk. This acts as an added bonus for performing.
4. During the night. A very young pup (6-7 weeks) may need to go out once during the night.

C) Treats

Every time your dog/puppy eliminates outside, lavish him with enthusiastic praise during the act and follow with an extra special treat (e.g., a small piece of cheese or hot dog). If you find that the praise makes him stop in the middle of eliminating, save it until just after she finishes.

D) Good Observing Skills

Your dog/puppy will give off signals that he needs to eliminate. It's essential that you learn what these are so you can prevent mistakes. Common behaviors include circling, restlessness & sniffing. Whenever you see these, take the dog out!

E) Patience

Don't lose your cool. Especially with puppies, many dogs will have accidents, especially in the beginning of training. Since your puppy will be supervised at all times when loose in the house, you will be able to provide the proper feedback as the dog begins to eliminate or, even better, take him out before he even starts (see "good observing skills..." above).

If you catch him starting to eliminate inside, interrupt him with a sharp sound. This may even prevent him from finishing. Urgently say "outside" and then get the puppy there as quickly as possible. Stay outside for the 5-minute period and praise & treat if he finishes eliminating. If not, bring him back inside and either supervise or crate him for another try later.

If the dog/puppy has an accident in the house or in the crate and you did not see it happen, NEVER punish him after the fact. Simply clean up the spot and then apply a commercial odor neutralizer or 50% vinegar to water. This will help prevent a certain location from smelling like an "indoor toilet". Most importantly after any accident, vow to supervise more closely in future and/or add another outing to your schedule.

Frequently Asked Questions

What do I do if there is no one to come home while I'm at work to let him out after 4 hours. Try to find a doggy daycare that can provide your puppy with the attention he requires during the first 4 months. The more accidents that go without feedback, the longer it will take to housetrain.

I follow the schedule but my puppy urinates several times an hour in the house! Is he normal? Have your veterinarian check whether the puppy has a urinary tract infection.

My puppy is four months old and still having frequent accidents. Help! He has too much unsupervised, loose time in the house. Remember that each time he eliminates in the house without being caught, he is being de-trained. Tighten up your regime.

I want my dog to eventually go outside but I'm confused. Should I paper-train first and then later train him to go outside? If you have access to the outdoors and your goal is for the dog to eliminate there, paper training is unnecessary. It's easier on the dog to not first teach him that it is okay to eliminate inside and then later change the rules.