



Housebreaking Your Dog

For many, housebreaking is the biggest hurdle in bringing home a new dog. Fortunately, with patience and a consistent approach, it's a very manageable challenge!

Eight Easy Steps to Housebreak Your Dog

1. Obtain a **kennel crate**. The floor space should only be large enough that your dog can turn around; if it is too large they may urinate on one end and sleep on the other. For puppies, you can get a crate suitable for their expected adult size and use cardboard to divide it off as they grow.
2. Until your pet goes **two weeks without an accident**, they are not allowed out of the crate unsupervised.
3. **Take them out frequently** (every 2-4 hours, at least).
4. Use a **cue word** when taking them outside. This is a word you **ONLY** say when taking them out, so they will learn to associate it with that. It can be anything (including "outside").
5. Always take them to **the same spot**, on a leash, until housebroken. Substrate preference is the main motivator for housebreaking – they learn to prefer going on certain substances like grass, gravel, dirt, etc.
6. Use a **different cue word** when at the designated spot (such as "potty").
7. Do not otherwise interact or play with them while outside until housebroken.
8. Reward them with praise, a pat, or a treat when they go. **PRO TIP:** you can use reward timing to train them to go longer (i.e., empty their bladder instead of marking everywhere).

Housebreaking DON'TS

- DON'T punish your dog for accidents. Unless you catch them in the act, they cannot understand what you are upset about – that "ashamed" look you see is just them being afraid of you. Making them anxious and fearful makes housebreaking **HARDER**. If you catch them in the act of having an accident, say the word and immediately take them out.
- DON'T use puppy pads unless you intend to use them for life. They are not an intermediate step; they are just a way to teach your dog to go in the house. And it's much more difficult to **UNTRAIN** that than it is to train them to go outside initially.
- DON'T get frustrated. Some dogs really are more difficult to housebreak than others – terriers and adult dogs especially. All can learn, though. It just takes time, consistency, and patience.
- DON'T expect perfect housebreaking until 3-4 months of age. Bladder control is weak until then – they really can't help it!

Housebreaking Problems

- If your dog is having accidents in their crate (and it is appropriately sized), they may have a medical issue such as a urinary tract infection. Call us for a checkup.
- Make sure everyone in the house is on the same page – consistency is key!