



## 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!

### Nine Easy Steps to Housebreak Your Dog

1. First, **crate train** your dog. It is important that they are comfortable in the crate before using it as a housebreaking tool – it should not be a punishment!
2. Until your pet goes **one week 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).
9. If they don't relieve themselves in a few minutes, or if you don't think they are done, put them back in the crate for 5 minutes. Then take them out one more time – this usually gets them focused!

### 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!