

Get Busy!

Simple ways to housetrain your dog.

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Q. What's the easiest/best way to housetrain a puppy? Should I use paper then graduate to going outside? About how long should it take until my dog is fully housetrained?

A. The easiest way to housetrain a puppy whether you are paper training or house training is to work on prevention, not correction. The common elements to successfully keeping your house "clean" are routine, consistency, patience and perseverance. First, take your pup to the veterinarian to ensure it is healthy and parasite free.

If you have an area that other dogs have not been exposed to nor will be, such as a backyard, you can start housebreaking procedures immediately. If you live in the city, papertraining may be needed until your puppy is fully inoculated. Speak with your veterinarian about inoculations and a consistent diet.

Pups do not develop muscle control until they are at least 4 months old. Expect your puppy will need to relieve itself after sleeping, eating, chewing, exercising and drinking. Signs that a pup needs to relieve itself include wandering away from you, restlessness, sniffing the floor, whining, panting and circling. If your pup makes a mistake-they all do-look at what you are not doing that allowed it to happen. Clean all mistakes with an odor neutralizer. Skip corrections, they'll only confuse the puppy.

Crate and Gate TrainingCrate- and/or gate-training are invaluable tools that help speed the process of being clean in the house as well as keeping your pup safe when it cannot be supervised. The crate can be used for both house and papertraining. Feed your puppy in the crate to ensure it will keep the crate clean when taken out consistently. The general rule: Most puppies can be confined for their age (in months) plus one hour. Two months old plus one is three hours; this time limit may differ with individual pups.

Your home bathroom is one of the best areas to confine a pup for papertraining. Place the food, bed and water by the gate and the papers toward the back of the bathroom. Place a dirtied piece of paper under and in the middle of the clean papers to ensure your pup learns to relieve itself in the middle of the papers and not on the edges.

Keep a RoutineWhat goes in must come out. Remember to feed your puppy at the same time every day with a measured amount of food. Leave food down for fifteen minutes. Pups need fresh water available all day or given throughout the day. However, toy breeds have special needs and some will need food down all day. Speak with your veterinarian about your toy puppy needs.