

Housetraining From Day One

Use persistence and lots of praise to teach your pup potty manners.

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Housetraining your puppy doesn't have to be a headache.

The more vigilant the family is about eliminating the pup's opportunity to have accidents and rewarding successes, the quicker and easier the pup is trained, says Julie Jackson, canine behavior coordinator for the Dane County Humane Society in Madison, Wis.

Begin training the first day you take your pup home.

How often you'll need to take him outside depends on his activities. Puppies normally need to go to the bathroom after they eat, drink, play, chew, or sleep.

After each of these activities, take your puppy outside on a leash and take along a tasty treat about the size of a pea. Try to go to the same spot each time. The odor from the previous visits will remind him why he's there. Once he starts to eliminate, softly praise him. (If speaking interrupts him, though, don't say anything.)

When he finishes, immediately give him the treat and more praise. Sometimes puppies urinate or defecate more than once per outing. After he relieves himself, don't rush back inside. Wait a few more minutes just in case. If you're outside for more than 10 minutes and your puppy has not gone to the bathroom, but you think he has to, go inside. Wait 10 minutes. Then return outside and try again. Keep this up until he goes. Make your puppy's elimination schedule more predictable by feeding him the same amount of food, at the same time, everyday. (Sudden diet changes can cause diarrhea.) To prevent indoor accidents, keep close tabs on him. Jackson recommends using a lightweight, 10-foot leash with a clasp on one end. Tie the leash around your waist or belt loop, and hook the clasp to your dog's collar. Now everywhere you go, he goes too. Look for signs that your puppy may need to eliminate, such as sniffing the floor in circles, or trying to run out of sight. If you're not home during the day, use a baby gate to confine your pup in a room with tile or linoleum to make cleaning up accidents easier.