

Houstraining Your Puppy

Paper training often prevents your dog from becoming fully houstrained.

Gary Wilkes

Theoretically, after only a few weeks, your dog will understand paper is an acceptable surface for elimination.

While paper training seems a perfect solution to accidents, there is a hidden price for the convenience: You have spent most of your time teaching your puppy to eliminate on an acceptable surface (paper) but in an unacceptable location (in the house). The newer, outdoor routine is not as firmly established as the indoor potty habit. Someday, your puppy will be away from the potty area when he needs to eliminate. Does the puppy search for newspaper, return to his most common potty location or attempt to get outside? If he searches for newspaper, he may have an accident far from his usual spot. If the puppy goes to the usual spot and doesn't find paper, he may learn to eliminate on bare floor. The least likely behavior will be an attempt to go outside. At a critical stage in the training, your puppy is forced to ignore his earliest experience in favor of a new set of rules. Some paper-trained dogs never make a full transition from paper to outdoors.

No law requires you to use only paper to aid in house training. Many small dogs use a litter box in place of newsprint. Others learn to use a shallow aluminum pan lined with a patch of sod as a potty area. This has the advantage of teaching the pup to eliminate on an outdoor surface.

Paper training also can serve as a backup to a houstraining program that emphasizes outdoor elimination from day one. Offering food treats for outdoor elimination, while offering only praise for elimination on paper, can teach both behaviors while stressing the preference for pottying outdoors.

Be patient. No perfect method of houstraining exists. However, using a little forethought can reduce frustration for you and your puppy.