

Throw Out the Paper

Paper-training often prevents a fully house-trained dog.

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Theoretically, after only a few weeks, it will understand paper is an acceptable surface for elimination. While the paper training seems a perfect solution to accidents, there is a hidden price for the convenience: You have spent most of your time teaching the 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, the pup will be away from the potty area when it needs to eliminate. Does the pup search for newspaper, return to its most common potty location or attempt to get outside? If it searches for newspaper, it may have an accident far from its usual spot. If the puppy goes to the usual spot and doesn't find paper, it 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, the puppy is forced to ignore its 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 cat 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 can also serve as a backup to a housetraining 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 outdoors.

Be patient. No perfect method of house-training exists. However, using a little forethought can reduce frustration for you and your pup.