

POTTY TRAINING BASICS

Welcome everyone! So, you have a new puppy (new or older dog), and one of the first things you, as a responsible dog owner, want or need to teach your new four-legged friend is when and where to relieve themselves.

The first essential training action is identifying where you want your dog to go potty. From there, this handout will help you succeed in potty training. One key factor to remember is that your dogs do not speak English or any other language.

This first action means you need to show them where potty and in a way that they will understand. Potty training will take time, patience, consistency, and constant watching. Remember, your part in this training is crucial. You are the one who corrects them and teaches them what is acceptable. Spending time at the beginning will save time cleaning up after an accident and frustration later. Patience is key; with it, you can guide your dog through this learning process, and your efforts will make a significant difference.

If you are always home with your puppy, you can train your four-legged friend to use a potty pad anytime or take them outside to their potty spot.

UNDERSTANDING A DOG'S BEHAVIOR: A KEY TO SUCCESSFUL POTTY TRAINING

What is a den, and what does it mean to your dog? Dens are places where one takes refuge, sleeps, or hangs out. In plain terms, it is where one feels safe and secure. What is the importance of this term as it relates to dogs or canines in potty training? First, they are denning animals, and more importantly, they have an instinct to not potty where they sleep. However, when they have no other choice, such as dogs or puppies born and bred in puppy mills, pet stores, or at a shelter, in these instances, they will eliminate where they sleep. Therefore, you will need to retrain.

Next, dogs live in packs, whether the pack is canine or human. What is a pack? A pack is a social group of conspecific canines. Animals living in a pack will learn all they know from watching others in it. Since you are the pack leader, you must show your puppies where to go potty.

Potty or pee pads are absorbent pads that give your dog a visual marker to associate the area where it can go potty. They are helpful in potty training, especially when dogs cannot go outside to their designated spot. While it's ideal for dogs to relieve themselves outside, a puppy walking more than 10 feet might find it too far. Potty pads can be a lifesaver, providing a convenient and effective solution. When 10 feet might be challenging for your puppy to hold their bladder, you must carry them to the potty pad in his safe spot, outside or inside.

When does a puppy need to go potty? There are three primary times when a dog must relieve themselves: 1) after waking up, 2) after eating, and 3) after playing.

What are the signs dogs show when they need to potty? You may notice one or several signs to tell you your puppy needs to go potty. Look for the following actions: 1) smelling around for old pee spots, 2) circling, 3) whining, or 4) arching their back with their tail over their back. The last sign is a squat, and at that moment, it is too late to stop them from pottying.

Puppies forget. If your puppy has an accident, as soon as it is done and walks away, it will have forgotten what it has done.

These are just a few things to remember before starting potty training.

IMPORTANT THINGS TO REMEMBER BEFORE YOU START TRAINING

1. Generally, puppies can "hold it" for about an hour for every month old they hour.

However, even at two months old, some puppies can "hold it" overnight. The slowing of metabolism while they sleep may be the cause. It would be best to immediately take the pups to their potty pad or outside when they wake up. When you reach the designated spot, use clear and straightforward cue words, such as "potty," as they relieve themselves. Reinforce the cue words and actions with praise. Use the same word "potty" for both peeing and pooping to avoid the dogs thinking that potty is just for peeing or pooping. If they do not associate potty as both, they may poop outside but pee inside or vice versa.

2. Dogs will not potty in their dens.

This rule applies to everyone except those taught otherwise (e.g., shelters). Dogs trained to potty in their dens will need retraining. For small dogs or puppies, understanding that the whole house is their den might not be possible. When this situation arises, start with a smaller space for the litters to establish their den until they understand that the whole house is their den. This may require you to use a smaller room (e.g., laundry room), a sectioned-off area, or a large crate to build the puppies' knowledge of their potty spot and what their den is. It will take time for your puppy to learn these concepts before they can roam free in the house. Do not let your puppy run the house without establishing firm boundaries. Otherwise, you can expect to find pee, poo, chewed-up furniture, and possibly other unwanted behavior, and all your potty training will be for not, and messes will always greet you when you come home.

3. Dogs usually need to potty 2 – 30 minutes after eating.

Watch your dog for signs of needing to potty. When the signs begin, take them to the potty pad or outside and use your cue words while they potty. Reward them with praise; a small treat afterward will help instill the proper place to relieve themselves. Your goal is to prevent accidents, and to meet that goal; you will need to observe for the signs that they need to potty and then take them to the appropriate spot BEFORE they potty.

4. Puppies will need to potty after they eat, sleep, and play.

Free feeding will not help you potty train your puppy. When your puppy is on a schedule, it does two things: 1) it lets you know when your puppy will need to potty, and more importantly, 2) it establishes yourself as the pack leader. Pack leaders eat the best food before the rest of the pack. Establishing a feeding schedule two to three times daily for 20 minutes will let the puppies know you are in charge. Routines are essential to potty training, such as playing after eating or the need for potty after a short nap.

5. Dogs will return to the same place(s) to potty.

Since dogs are pack animals, they have the instinct to potty wherever they smell the scent of previous potty spots. This instinct will help teach the puppy to potty outside their den like humans do. If there are earlier scents in your den where a dog had an accident, they will continue returning to that spot unless you show them differently and REMOVE the previous scents. Canines have 10 million stronger senses for detecting smells and 40 times more smell-sensitive receptors in their brains than ours. If that isn't impressive enough, the part of the brain used to analyze smell in dogs is 40 times greater than that of humans. If you were to clean up after a dog's accident with bleach, they would still smell the scent. It's essential to use a product with enzymes and friendly bacteria to break down the smell of potty, which your puppy will no longer detect.

THINGS TO DO:

- Have realistic expectations. Potty training doesn't happen overnight.
- Expect mistakes. It happens
- Supervise, supervise, supervise. If you are not watching, then you can't correct the behavior.
- Have cleaning supplies ready to clean up the mistakes. Use a product made to break down the potty scents that are safe to use.
- Be consistent. Establish a routine, plan, and stick to it.

Like human babies, puppies need to learn in a way they understand over time. Keeping your puppy in sight to ensure they know and behave correctly will help establish trust. The more they demonstrate their trustworthiness in behaving properly, the more they can

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increase their freedom. Unacceptable behavior includes the destructive behavior of chewing and tearing up items not on an approved list of toys or items.

If you catch your puppy about to make a mistake, or in the process, startle them with a negative marker sound, "eh," without anger in your tone to let them know that what they are attempting to do is wrong. Then, nicely take them to their appropriate place and say, "Potty here" pleasantly, even if they have just finished pottying in another spot. It is important to praise your puppy for performing correct behavior. Keep to a routine to solidify the proper behavior.

Lastly, puppies forget! If your puppy has an accident, as soon as it is done and walks away, it will have forgotten what it has done.

THINGS **NOT** TO DO:

- Never hit or yell at your dog.
- Do not rub your puppy's face in the mistake.
- Don't stress
- Do not have unrealistic expectations.

A golden rule: **never hit or yell at your puppy**. Not only are you instilling unnecessary fear into the puppy, but it will also fear and hide when it's time to potty because the puppies will assume you are mad at them when they do potty. They do not understand the difference between being mad for pottying and being angry when they do not go to their designated spot. Do not discipline your puppy until you are sure your puppy knows what is expected of them.

Do not rub the pup's face in the potty accident, as they will have no idea why (remember, puppies forget). Your body language tells them you are displeased with them, but once again, they will not know why. Positive reinforcement achieves better results while teaching them what is expected, thus minimizing mistakes.

Stay calm if your dog seems to know where you want them to potty but still has accidents. There is a chance the puppy forgot or is stressed due to routine or schedule changes. If this is the case, return to potty training where they seemed to understand best. Take your time with the next step until they are ready. Every dog is different; not all dogs are the same in learning.

Side note: Health issues, changes in the household, diet, or body language may cause your potty-trained companion to have relapses or to mark their territory. If this happens, return to a routine or simple obedience training. This will re-establish you as the top dog.

Now armed with some doggy knowledge, one of the easiest ways to teach your puppy proper potty ethics is to make it a safe room in which they must be kept at all times unless

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he has constant supervision. Even if you take your puppy outside for their potty breaks, keeping them in their safe room when they are not supervised will help reinforce their place, but it may also save things from being unnecessarily chewed or destroyed. Think of it like a playpen for an infant. They are in a confined space that is controlled and safe and do not get into shenanigans.

A puppy-proof bathroom or laundry room is excellent when you are away from home. However, keeping your pup in constant isolation when you are home may produce a poorly socialized or aggressive dog. To avoid this, look into portable fencing to section off parts of your kitchen for their safe area. The kitchen is a good location because it is generally next to a living area where they can still see most of their pack. Your puppy should always be in a safe place unless they are under strict supervision.

Put a soft bed in the safe room, only big enough for them to lie on. If your puppy is very young or cold, place a heating pad under the bed, set on low during the nighttime. This will help them stay warm throughout the night. Another option in place of a bed is to use their kennel and leave the door open. If your kennel is too big, the puppy will use the extra area for their potty area. To avoid this, place a box or something similar in the back of the kennel so the puppy has only enough room to lie down. A safe room is the best option for puppies who are skilled climbers.

If you're using a safe room, cover the entire floor with potty pads; otherwise, the puppy must choose where to relieve itself (i.e., bare floor or potty pad). They will potty wherever they happen to be. Also, be mindful that puppies may not want to potty outside if it is cold.

The safe room is a better option than leaving your puppy outside in the elements when you are away from home. Also, they can be left in their safe room at night to avoid being woken up every few hours to take them outside to potty. Remember to always have water in the safe room they are occupying.

'Til we wag tails again...

April's K911 Academy
(575) 635-9888