

How to house train your puppy

Toilet training puppies takes time and patience, this should be considered BEFORE taking on a young untrained puppy as all too often 'accidents' can cause a breakdown in the relationship between owner and dog.

Most puppies can begin a house training regime at about 6 weeks of age. You can either train them by going directly outside in your garden or by using paper in a safe area of your home - ideal if you live in a flat.

Paper training can later be adapted to outside training once your puppy has learnt the basics.

You need to stick to a routine when you embark on house training, this means that all members of the family MUST follow the same plan otherwise confusion will cause 'accidents'.

Puppies can take up to 6 weeks on average to learn the rules of toileting, therefore you must have the time to teach them.

A basic training routine:

- As soon as your puppy wakes up take him outside or to the paper to relieve himself. Wait with him and play with him until urination occurs. Once he has urinated reward him with praise and a treat
- Feed your puppy his first meal at a suitable time to fit in with your daily routine, once he has eaten take him outside or to the paper to relieve himself. Wait for urination to occur then praise and reward him.
- Every 2 hours take him outside to relieve himself, making sure you are present at all times, praise and a reward once he urinates.
- After each meal follow the same routine
- Decide on a suitable 'bedtime' for your puppy, usually around 9 or 10pm and take him outside for the last time. Once again wait with him until he urinates and praise and reward as before. You may wish to give restricted access to water during the night - this should help prevent accidents in the night - don't take water away at any other time of day or if it is particularly hot weather.
- If you are using the paper method of training, once you have established a routine of using the paper you should take some soiled paper outside and also put down some clean paper down. Your puppy should already know to use the paper as his toileting area but you must remain with him until he urinates then praise and reward as before.

- Eventually you should reduce the size of the paper until he is going on the ground. Remember to introduce different textures by using a concrete slab or a tray of grass or gravel in the area to get him used to different textures - otherwise he may only ever toilet on one surface type.
- You can introduce a command, for example 'go wee' once he has learnt the basic rule of where to go, time the command right so you say it when he is urinating and you are getting consistently good results on each trip outside or to the paper. This will help when you need him to go on a walk or in a different area -praise him when he responds to the command.

Urination should happen every time you take him out during training, defecation will only happen occasionally but you must be prepared to wait until this has happened usually after meal times.

Only walk your puppy once he has urinated in the garden or on the paper, this will also act as a reward - once he's been to the loo he gets a walk!

Lastly, you **MUST** tolerate the accidents that will inevitably happen during the training process. **NEVER** smack your puppy or rub his nose in the mess or punish him in any way, this will only make him frightened of you.

Clean accidental toilet areas with a biological cleaner then depending on the surface use surgical spirit to eliminate the smell of the ammonia completely. Do not use bleach as the smell will encourage them to use the area again.

A common problem of puppies is coprophagia - when they eat their faeces. This disgusting habit requires you to be an expert at picking up deposits before the pup can get to it. Having the puppy on a lead while toilet training will give you better control over this situation and a firm 'NO' when they try to get to it will also help. Don't smack or punish as this is a learning curve and all part of growing up. You can get various supplements to help with this problem that give faeces a foul taste (they think it tastes nice - honestly!) to discourage this behaviour but the best method is don't give them the opportunity.

Don't forget to be a responsible pet owner once your puppy is trained and always take your poo bags out on every walk. An £80 fine is in place at the moment in Norfolk for those who don't 'clean up'