



Jasper County Animal Rescue League and Humane Society
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Housetraining for Dogs and Puppies

One of the reasons dogs make such wonderful companions is because of their ability to be trained not to eliminate in your home. Because dogs are den animals, they have a natural instinct to keep their sleeping and eating area free of waste.

The goal in successful housetraining is to teach your dog the whole house is your den area and he needs to eliminate in a designated area. Housetraining is not a behavior problem, eliminating is natural for a dog. Housetraining requires teaching your dog where to eliminate.

During the housetraining process, your dog **must** always be in **one of only three places**:

1. Outside with you.
2. Inside with constant supervision (use of a house leash).
3. In a puppy safe zone (use of a crate).

When the dog is outside with you:

- Establish a routine for going outside. Always use a key phrase like “outside”. Pick up the dog’s leash and lead him to the same door. Make the dog sit before opening the door.
- You must be outside to reward the dog at the exact moment he eliminates in the designated area. If you wait at the door and praise the dog upon returning to you, he will associate the praise for coming in the door not for eliminating outside.
- Take the dog to the same area every time. Once the dog starts to eliminate give a command like “get busy” or “go potty” in a low voice. This will help to train the dog to go on command.
- Do not let the dog walk around a lot. Stand in one spot and let the dog to go only as far as the leash will allow. Keep distractions to a minimum.
- Praise as soon as the puppy is done eliminating. After the dog has finished you can allow play time or free time outside.
- If the dog doesn’t go take him back in, put him in his puppy safe zone and try again after a few minutes. Repeat this process until the puppy eliminates outside.
- Make sure the dog is finished before coming back inside. Sometimes dogs don’t completely empty their bladder all at once.
- If you take your dog for a walk, be sure he eliminates first. Ending the walk once the dog has done his business will result in him holding his bladder to prevent the walk from ending.

When the dog is inside with your constant supervision:

- Attach a 6’ or 8’ leash to your dog. Let him drag it around the house. This will become your umbilical cord. Use the leash to keep the dog within your view at all times. Attach the leash to your belt loop if necessary.
- It is important to spend time in all the areas you want the dog to consider his den. Otherwise your dog will

not consider a room he's never been allowed in before to be part of his den and will most likely soil in the area.

- Set a feeding schedule so you will know when your dog will need to eliminate. Usually your dog will need a break about 15 minutes after eating.
- Watch the dog for signs that he might have to go like sniffing around in circles or squatting.
- Until a puppy reaches the age of 4-5 months, he physically cannot hold his bladder for more than an hour or two. You must take very young pups outside after they eat, drink, sleep, nap, play, chew, or any other change of activity. It is easier to instill good habits than break bad ones.
- If you find an accident, it is your fault not the dog's. NEVER hit, yell, or rub his nose in the mistake. A dog cannot relate your anger to his mess on the floor.
- Make sure to clean up any area where the dog has eliminated with an **enzymatic** cleaner like Nature's Miracle or Woolite Pet Stain and Odor Remover. These cleaners are formulated specifically to break down odors that might lure the dog to return to the same area.
- If you catch your dog in the act, make a loud noise to interrupt him and give the command to go outside. Physically take the dog out to finish the job and then praise. NEVER punish your dog if caught. This will only teach him not to eliminate in front of you whether that occurs inside or out. Take any feces or urine soaked towels out and place it in the designated area to encourage the dog to go there.
- When you cannot watch your dog, put him in his puppy safe zone.

When your dog is in his puppy safe zone:

- The best place for an unsupervised dog is in a kennel or crate. If used appropriately a kennel is like a den not a prison. Dogs feel more secure in a smaller area just as a toddler would in a playpen.
- By putting a dog into a small, safe area you help him to learn bladder control. This also takes advantage of a dog's natural instinct to keep his bed area clean.
- The use of a kennel also stops other bad habits from forming like chewing and digging.
- Place the kennel in a fairly high traffic area so the dog does not feel isolated.
- For a puppy under 4 months of age, confine him in a crate for a maximum of 2 hours at a time. For a puppy 4 months and older, confine him in a crate for a maximum of 4 hours at a time. Be sure to provide the dog with lots of play and exercise when not in the crate.
- Before the dog goes into the crate, make sure he has completely emptied his bladder and bowels.
- Take the dog outside immediately after you let him out of the crate.
- Do not open the door to his crate if the dog is barking, whining or making any kind of a fuss unless he needs to eliminate. This will only teach him that a noisy dog gets let out.
- Provide your dog with lots of chew toys and dog puzzles to occupy him while in the crate. It is also a good idea to rotate the toys every couple of days to prevent boredom. Be careful that the dog cannot chew parts of the toys off and choke on them.
- A dog can usually sleep through the night without needing a bathroom break except for very young puppies. Because their metabolism slows down, just like yours does, many dogs can sleep for up to 8 hours before needing to go outside. Remember that just because he can hold it that long during the night does not mean he can during the day.
- See our crate training guide to help you introduce your dog to his crate.

Other helpful tips:

- It is not a good idea to paper train your dog unless absolutely necessary. Remember you want your dog to view your entire house as a den and he should not be allowed to soil anywhere inside.
- If you need to provide a space for your dog to eliminate inside, then make it as much like the designated area as possible. For example if your dog usually eliminates outdoors in your yard make a sod box for your dog to eliminate in and place it on a porch. Train him to this area just as you would to the designated area.
- Be consistent and patient. Remember the problem is not the act itself only the location.
- A puppy that has been repeatedly kept in a dirty area may become accustomed to living with his own urine and feces. These puppies need to be retrained to keep their den area clean. Follow the same guidelines as above and make sure to keep the puppy's kennel very clean.
- Treat an adult dog just as you would a puppy by following the steps above, until he learns the routine of your house. If the dog was previously housetrained, he should pick up the idea in no time.
- An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.