

Housetraining Your Dog

This is how to teach your puppy to pee and poop where you want him to. Housetraining is really not a "breaking" process, it is a "teaching" process. All teaching is more successful when done with PRAISE.

The first thing one needs to realize when teaching a puppy is that he is *just a puppy*. Sometimes we forget that puppies do not do things maliciously, nor spitefully. They are not "dumb," they are just baby-puppy-dogs! Someone once said that a dog is as dumb as its owner, or as smart. Although dogs, just like people, have their own personalities and their own strengths and weaknesses, *you* are the teacher, and your dog will learn what you teach him (good or bad.) If you think your puppy looks cute pawing at your leg, and you encourage it, you are teaching your puppy to jump up on people. But that's a whole 'nother story. (If it sounds familiar read about the "[Off](#)" command).



Depending on the age of your puppy, he will have varying control of his bladder. Very young puppies do not have much control, and any form of excitement can trigger them to pee right then and there! So, if your puppy has an accident, always ask yourself if it was induced by excitement, or even anxiety. This will help you understand that it is *your* responsibility to keep a close eye on your puppy AT ALL TIMES. When your puppy reaches about 4-6 months of age, he should have pretty good control of his bladder. He should be able to "hold it" for a short period of time so that he can pee or poop outside when and where he is supposed to. Many dogs are housebroken at a younger age than this, but if you're still having trouble after 5 months of age, after **consistent** teaching, you should probably re-evaluate your teaching method and bring your dog to the vet to rule out any medical causes.

Here are the basics of what to do:

Keep a very open eye on your puppy. Try to figure out what his "I gotta poop!" face looks like, and keep watching for it. He'll show that face when you least expect it! If you're lucky enough to recognize his "poop face," take him outside IMMEDIATELY not in 2 minutes; that will be way too late. Immediately means RIGHT NOW! That is your daily (and sometimes nightly) job for about 2-4 months, looking for his "poop face." Usually it is not that easy to discern a "poop face" until he is already squatting on the newspaper you were reading on the floor. That is where your "teaching" comes into play: Your puppy needs to be taken outside after every change in activity. This means, take him out after he eats, after he wakes up, after he plays, after you come home, etc. When you take him out say "Do you want to go outside? Do you want to go outside?" This will eventually teach your puppy that phrase, as well as the word "outside." Once you get outside, say "GO PEE! GO PEE!" Keep repeating this until your puppy goes pee. While he is going pee say "Good Go Pee, Good Go Pee Outside!" Be careful not to be too enthusiastic at this point, you want to encourage him to keep going pee, not get him so excited that he stops mid-stream. When he's done peeing, that's when the theatrics begin. Jump up and down, clap your hands, give him happy pats on the sides, say "GOOD GO PEE! GOOD GO PEE OUTSIDE!" Your dog will see how obviously happy you are, and he will learn that peeing outside is a very good thing to do! After he pees, if you think he may have to poop, then say "GO POOP, GO POOP!" and repeat everything again. Don't worry too much about the PEE and POOP difference. You don't actually *need* two separate words or commands. But sometimes when your dog is older, it helps to be able to tell him "go poop" while you are pulled off to the side of the road on a car trip. Incidentally, you can choose any command word you like. Many people use "Hurry Up" instead of "Go Pee." You may feel more comfortable saying certain things more than others, just be sure to use certain words and be consistent.

If your puppy doesn't pee in 20 minutes, then say "Are you READY?" Of course, he won't know what you're talking about yet, but you are teaching him phrases that will be most helpful in the future. When you come in the house, either confine your pup to his blocked off area or crate OR watch him like a hawk for about 10 or 15 minutes, then take him out again, repeating the process. You need to learn your puppy's preferences. Does he pee and poop in the morning, but just pee after naps? Does he pee at 3 a.m., but doesn't poop until 7 a.m.? The more familiar you become with your pup's habits, the better able you are to teach him.

Now, if that's all there was to it, you wouldn't be reading this would you?

The hard part comes when your puppy has an "accident." Accidents happen for two reasons:

1. You didn't put your puppy in a confined area where he wouldn't pee or poop.
2. You didn't watch your puppy when you were supposed to be supervising him.

Notice that neither one of the reasons are your puppy's fault.

Since neither one of these reasons are your puppy's fault, there is no need to *ever* scold your puppy. Remember, always teach with PRAISE! If your puppy is peeing in his blocked-off area or crate, it probably means that the area is too big. If the puppy has room to pee in one corner, and play in the other corner, he probably will. If you can't scold your puppy, then what are you supposed to do? Try scolding yourself, and see if that makes you more eager to watch your puppy better next time (probably not). Instead, praise yourself for *not* scolding your puppy, and get on with the job of teaching!

In order to teach your puppy not to pee (or poop) in the house, you must catch him in the act. When you catch him in the act of peeing, or squatting to pee, yell "HEY!" and/or push (not hit) his butt. The goal is not to hurt or scold the puppy. The goal is to get him to stop peeing mid-stream by surprising the heck out of him! Next, say "OUTSIDE! OUTSIDE!" in an enthusiastic voice (not a scolding voice). If your puppy is really young, pick him up and carry him IMMEDIATELY outside. As he gets a little older, you can run with him to the door (or his [doggie door](#)) and then go outside with him. When you get outside, do the "go pee" routine again. If he doesn't pee, take him inside and WATCH HIM, then take him out again in another 10 - 15 minutes. (Yes, teaching is work!) However, if you feel your pup emptied himself inside the house and he no longer *has* to pee, you can skip the second trip outside, but be careful, don't assume too much!

Puppies usually learn faster when you spend more time with them. The less time you have to teach, the longer it will take them to learn. Puppies are also individuals and individuals are different. Some puppies learn fairly quickly (a few weeks), others take a few months. Just remember to *praise*!

So, you thought your puppy was housebroken, but came home to a puddle on the floor. First, you may have been gone too long. Puppies can't be expected to "hold it" for eight long hours. If you have a fenced yard, consider getting a [doggie door](#). Okay, okay, so you *have* a doggie door, but there is still a puddle in the middle of the floor! DO NOT SCOLD your puppy. He is so happy to see you come home, don't scold him for being happy to see you. Also, don't rub his nose in it (yuck!) - it doesn't do any good. Instead, place him in a confined area where he can't see you clean it up. This is probably the hardest part of all of housetraining! But just do it. Use straight vinegar to take away the odor, some baking powder or borax wouldn't hurt either. Now ask yourself, were you gone longer than you usually are? This would have made your puppy over-anxious, and made it very easy to pee on the spot. The best thing to do in this case is to make the confined area smaller again.

Many times my Lab/Golden mix, [Tsuwa](#), would just "forget" to go out her doggie door to pee. She would be playing with her German Shepherd mix brother and then she had to go! So she went. She had accidents about every three days or so for about a month and a half. Somewhere between 4 and 5 months old, I kept looking for the next puddle, but didn't find one anymore. Just when you're about ready to give up, it seems like they finally "get it!"