



Housetraining

Housetraining is an important skill set that every dog needs to learn when living in a home. The most important thing to keep in mind is that, as mentioned, housetraining is a skill which needs to be learned. Dogs do not instinctively know that they should not eliminate inside the home or that they need to wait a certain amount of time between bathroom outings. It's on us as their caregivers to teach them what we want them to do.

Tools of the Trade

Like most things, there are tools to help with this process. You may not need all of the below items depending on your preference, your dogs' needs, home setup, etc. but keep in mind that your dog will need some sort of confinement for the training process to work.

List of training tools:

- Crate/X-pen
- Baby gate(s)
- Enzymatic cleaner
- Treats

The easiest and most efficient way of housetraining a dog is to use either a crate or an x-pen. Crates have gotten a bad reputation over time, many people feeling as though they are cruel, or feel bad about having to confine their dog to such a small space. When used correctly, a crate is a really great tool and many dogs come to love their crate as a safe and comfortable place to be. A crate training protocol can be found at the end of this manual.

An x-pen is a good alternative if you either don't want to or can't use a crate for whatever reason. The same rules apply to an x-pen as to a crate where it should be a very comfortable place to be, not too much space where they could eliminate and then ignore it, always positive never for punishment, etc. If your dog is a jumper then an x-pen may not be a good option. X-pens are also much easier to push around, so you may find that your dog ends up in a different place than where you originally left them.

For the sake of ease, I will be referring to your dog's space as the "crate" throughout this writeup. Any portion of this protocol will still be applicable to using an x-pen in place of a crate, if desired or needed.

Getting Started

Ideally, you'll have an opportunity to set up your home before bringing in your dog. Get their

crate set up by choosing a permanent location for it, lay down their bedding, toys, water bowl, and anything else you want to put in the space. Establish which rooms are okay for your dog to be in initially (**the fewer the better!**), and use baby gates to block access to other rooms you do not want your dog to go into until training is complete (we'll get more into that in the next section). **The most important part of housetraining is that your pup stays within your sight at all times (or is in a crate/x pen if you're not present) until he's fully house trained.**

Establishing a Routine

Establishing a routine and consistent schedule is one of the most important aspects of housetraining success. Feeding the same number of times and at the same times each day, going out for walks at the same times will help your dog to establish a pattern and catch on to a schedule to help establish habits. Obviously, things change from day to day so there is no such thing as keeping a perfect schedule but so long as we're close then that will work just fine. Most common times to take a dog out are:

- In the morning when you wake up/before leaving for the day
- When you come home from work or any other extended time away from home
- Before going to bed at night

Many people will add in an additional time or two during the day as well but that is up to you, your schedule, and your dogs' needs. Puppies will need to go out for bathroom breaks much more often, up to once an hour, and small dogs may need to go out more often as well as their bladders are simply much smaller than that of a larger dog. Best practice is to take your dog out as often as possible and then cut back on the amount of times you're going out as you see that they are holding it and no longer eliminating in the home. For example: start by taking your dog out every hour, then drop to every 2 hours as they are consistently holding it and not eliminating inside. Then, drop to every 3 hours, then every 4 hours, and finally whatever your normal schedule will be. Again, in a perfect world this is the ideal schedule, but since that does not exist for most of us alter this as it fits you.

Other high probability times that your dog will need to go out for a bathroom break include:

- Waking up from a nap
- 10-20min after eating, or after drinking a large amount of water
- After playing/physical activity

Keep in mind that not every time you take your dog out needs to be a full-blown walk. It certainly can be, and they'll likely appreciate that, but just going out for quick opportunities to eliminate is all most outings will need to be.

When They Go

When your dog eliminates outside be sure to give them lots of praise and treats and really make it seem like it's the greatest thing in the world what they just did. Once your dog is housetrained you can wean the treats and keep the verbal praise so you can continue to

reinforce that they've done a good job.

When (not if) your dog eliminates inside, simply ignore them and clean it up. That's it. They should not be punished or scolded or shown what they did, and no rubbing their nose in it. Often times when we find that our dog has eliminated inside the home many minutes to hours have passed. Even if we catch them just seconds afterwards the opportunity to get them outside and reinforce the behavior we do want has come and gone. Plus you may risk making your dog afraid of you. At best, he will associate his going to the bathroom with your anger, not realizing that you're upset because of where he went, but just that he went to the bathroom **at all**, so he will begin hiding away to go to the bathroom, resulting in accidents you won't notice for a while. **A pup who's afraid to do his business in front of you will be a very difficult pup to potty train!**

A proper cleaner is required to help prevent further accidents in the home. An enzymatic cleaner is what you want to go with as it is specifically designed to clean up pet waste. The science behind it is that the cleaner breaks down the enzymes in your dog's waste and completely eliminates the odor. For dogs, the golden rule is that if it smells like a bathroom, it is a bathroom (so they tend to go to the same spot if it still smells like pee). Things like basic soap, Lysol, even bleach do not actually break down the enzymes left behind when we clean it up so they are largely ineffective to use. Nature's Miracle is the leading brand name pet cleaner though any enzymatic cleaner will work just the same, even the cheap stuff at your local grocery store.

I Saw the Sign

Every dog has one or more signs or signals that they need to go out and eliminate. Common signs include:

- Sudden increased sniffing
- Pacing or walking in circles
- Whining or crying vocalizations
- Standing near their leash or typical point of exit
- Pawing at you or the door
- Barking

Your dog may mix or match any or all of these signals, or even create their own custom ones to let you know they need to go out. Puppies tend to be much more subtle with their signals, sometimes even just completely stopping in the middle of what they were doing and eliminating, and may take some extra time to develop signs as they learn what it feels like to "need to go".

Supervision and Confinement

During the housetraining process it is important that you are able to keep a watchful eye on

your dog at all times. Between trips outside keep your dog close to you, either closing doors, utilizing baby gates, or keeping them on leash and tethering them to you to keep them in the same room as you. Do not give your dog full access to your home, with the exception of a living space such as a studio apartment, until they are housetrained. Keeping their world small and restricting their access to parts or rooms of the home that you are not in allows you to keep a lookout for any of their signs that they need to eliminate, and prevents them from wandering off, eliminating, and then coming back to rest without you being any the wiser. As their housetraining progresses and accidents in the home decrease we can begin to give them more access to the rest of the home, opening things up a room or two at a time, an additional level, or whatever your setup is.

When you are unable to watch your dog, be it when you're not home or you're doing something that requires either your full attention or being in a separate room as your dog, that is when the crate comes into play. At these times lead your dog to their crate, give them some good toys to play with, a nice chew or frozen enrichment to work on, and then close them in until you can watch them again.

Reminder to follow and work on the crate training protocol found at the end of this manual.

When to Declare Victory

Housetraining is "complete" when your dog does not regularly eliminate inside the home, does regularly eliminate outside, and can have full access to your home. Dependence on continuing to crate your dog when you are not home is up to you and your dog's needs and preferences.

Keep in mind that once your dog is housetrained this does not mean that they will never eliminate inside the home again. They will. Things happen. You'll get stuck at work one day or stay out for longer than you anticipated and your dog couldn't hold it. They could not be feeling well and it hurts to hold their bladder so they quite literally need to relieve themselves. It's okay. Things happen.

Previously Housetrained Dogs Having "Accidents"

If your dog has previously been house trained, and is suddenly having accidents, your first step should be a complete medical exam. Irregular bathroom habits can be symptomatic of a number of medical issues. Also, as dogs get older, they tend to lose control of their bladders and need to go to the bathroom more often, or they may become incontinent. Medications usually help clear these issues up quickly.

If the exam is clear, think about what things may have changed in your life recently. Did something happen on a walk or outside that's making your dog fearful of going outside (weather, loud noises, leash corrections, etc)? Also keep in mind a change in environment or routine can cause a dog to have a relapse in housetraining. Take measures to reduce your dog's stress during these changes (dog appeasing pheromones, calming music, Thundershirts, etc),

and remember to allow your dog time to adjust. If they continue having accidents, just go back and start at the beginning with housetraining again (do not allow them out of your sight, take them outside every hour, etc). Don't forget to clean up accidents with an **enzymatic** cleaner to get rid of the smell—otherwise your dog will likely go there again!

Many people report that keeping an “accident journal” with specifics of every accident—including time, location, situation/environment, who is present and any other possible details—helps to identify patterns and detect the problem.

Marking

According to studies, marking can be reduced 70-80% by castration. If your dog is fixed and still marking, consider the possibility of the frequent presence of stray animals outside your house and purchasing deterrents to keep them away. Your dog may be reacting to their smells and feel the need to constantly remark his territory. Also with marking it is of crucial importance that you completely eliminate the smell of previous accidents with proper cleaner, or the dog will continue marking the same spot. If there are no vertical spots in your yard for your dog to mark, consider purchasing posts or shrubs and provide many for your dog to mark. Lastly, block off areas that your dog frequently marks in the house.

Anxiety could also be a contributor to marking. Consider pheromones such as DAP (dog-appeasing pheromone), which comes in spray bottles, collars, and diffusers.

Other Elimination Issues

You run into other elimination behaviors that seem like they're housetraining issues but in actuality the problem is stemming from something else and eliminating inside the home is a symptom of an underlying condition.

Medical/Health

Medical issues can be a big factor and it is recommended that if you see either a regression in housetraining or you have a dog who is already housetrained but has suddenly began eliminating inside to get them checked out at the vet. You will likely need to increase the amount of times you take your dog out to offer them the chance to eliminate while they are treated medically and begin to feel better.

Medications

Certain medications may cause an increase in urination or diarrhea as a side effect. Talk to your vet to make sure these side effects are normal and if they are then you'll need to offer your dog additional bathroom breaks until they're off the medication.

Separation Anxiety

A common sign of Separation anxiety (SA) is urinating and/or defecating when left alone. Just because your dog does, or does not, do this does not mean that they do or don't have SA.

Please see our SA manual for additional information.

Noise Sensitivity/Phobia

Dogs who have noise sensitivities or phobias may lose control of their bladders during events such as thunderstorms, fireworks, construction noise. If this is the case it is recommended to reach out to a certified trainer to help you create a plan to work on the noise sensitivity. It's also common that noise sensitivity is linked to other behavioral issues so getting it checked out could lead to additional findings that help your dog out even more.

Submissive/Excitement Urination

Some dogs may lose control of their bladder when they are in highly arousing social situations, such as meeting new people. They become very excited or submissive (or both) and dribble urine on the floor. This is a completely normal canine behavior, and should NOT be punished. Punishing submissive or excited urination will likely cause the dog to become even **more** excited or show even **more** submission in reaction to your anger. If you have such a "dribbler," make sure that you keep all social interactions and greetings as calm and non-exciting as possible, and ignore your dog if he is peeing out of excitement or submission, and eventually, most pups grow out of the habit.

Troubleshooting

If your dog stays outside for long periods of time but then goes to the bathroom as soon as they come inside, they may have learned that they will be taken inside as soon as they go to the bathroom, so they put off going to the bathroom outside in order to have more time outside. To counter this, always ensure that they are allowed to stay outside for at least a few minutes after they use the bathroom. Going to the bathroom should not be a cue for going inside.

If they put off going to the bathroom outside, you can teach them to go as soon as they get outside by allowing them a minute or two to go to the bathroom, and if they don't in that amount of time, they go back inside. Wait a few minutes, and then try again. Repeat until they go to the bathroom as soon as they go outside. Then allow them to spend leisure time outside after they go to the bathroom. You can also teach them to go on cue (see previous section).

One last tip is to try using the same door each time you take the dog outside to go to the bathroom (and using a different door for walks/play time). This will help the dog to know where to go when he needs to "go!"