

Housetraining

Dogs are naturally clean animals: given a choice, they will urinate and defecate away from their sleeping and eating areas. However, it is not obvious to dogs that carpets and floors are inappropriate elimination sites. They must be systematically taught to discriminate indoors vs. outdoors and to exclusively use the latter.

The key to housetraining is getting a history of rewarded trials in the desired area.

HOUSETRAINING PROCEDURE

- **Decide** where the doggie bathroom is going to be
- **Go there regularly:** first thing in the morning, last thing before bed, shortly after meals, when he comes out of his crate and, in the case of a puppy, every hour or so
- **Go out with the dog** so you can cheer and reward at the right moment
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- **Confine to one room:** never, ever give an untrained dog or puppy access to more than the kitchen or a small, easily cleaned area
- **Supervise** whenever he's uncrated, especially if he's "full." If you must take your eyes off him, even for a minute, crate him
- **Interrupt mistakes.** Catch him as he starts to go, not afterwards. After interrupting him, hustle him outside to the bathroom area: praise if he finishes here. Then clean up the indoor mess
- **Never punish late:** if he made the mistake one hour or ten seconds ago, you are too late. It is unfair and abusive to punish late
- **Catch him in the act of doing it right:** follow the rules so you are the good guy

TRAINING REGRESSIONS

Illness can cause a trained dog to regress as can a change in routine. A sudden diet change often causes diarrhea that the dog can't control. Many dogs do not generalize their housetraining to all indoor locations. This plus the stress of adapting to a new home may cause a trained dog to make mistakes in new surroundings. New owners must supervise closely to interrupt on time, and provide extra opportunities, with rewards, for newly adopted dogs to use their new bathroom areas.