



www.puppyk.com

Jutka Terris, CPDT-KA

HOUSE TRAINING & YOUR PUPPY

House training is your most urgent priority when introducing your puppy to your household because it often can be the most confusing and frustrating part of puppyhood. First impressions count greatly! What will those first lessons be? Will your puppy learn that it is oh-so-convenient and lovely to eliminate on the nice plush absorbent carpet or rug in your living room? Or will he learn that the **ONLY** place to go is outdoors, and when peeing or pooping there, the rewards are great?

Let us explain how to **MOTIVATE** your puppy to go outside and **PREVENT** him from going inside. But before getting started, let me emphasize two facts:

1. ***House training does not magically happen at a certain age.*** If you don't teach your puppy, from day one, about where it is acceptable to eliminate, he will still learn where the bathroom is...except that he will learn to go **INDOORS**. Every time your puppy relieves himself, the emptying of that full bladder *feels good* and thus gives positive reinforcement for peeing...even if it's on your carpet! Despite you getting rid of the smell with an enzyme-based cleaner (which you should do, common household cleaners are not sufficient), he may go back there to pee. Or on a similar surface. Not just this week and next, but for years and years...
2. ***Your puppy really does NOT know where he is supposed to go until you teach him.*** Your puppy may have some preferences, depending on what they learned at their breeder or foster family. For example, they may have learned a preference for a certain surface. Hopefully they also learned to not mess up their own little bed area/crate. What they do **NOT** know though is where it is acceptable to pee and poop in **YOUR** house. It is solely up to you to teach them. ***Therefore, you must approach the whole process not thinking puppy knows right from wrong. If mistakes are made, instead of punishing your puppy, ask yourself: how can I readjust the schedule to prevent this from happening again?***

So, what to do to make sure puppy practices going outdoors and outdoors only? (Please forget pee pads inside!) There are two key aspects:

1. REWARD POTTYING OUTSIDE

2. PREVENT POSSIBILITY OF ACCIDENTS INSIDE

1. REWARD SUCCESS: TREAT WITH YUMMY TREATS(!), PRAISE AND PLAY

Praise is lovely, but would you show up for work just to have your boss tell you "Good job!"? No, you want to get paid, too. So, please do both for your puppy: praise and treat! Right after he is done (don't make him cut it off his pee by getting excited as he starts), give him either a very special treat (such as small pieces of string cheese or cold cuts), or at least three pieces of good treats/kibble as you keep praising him. If he likes sniffing and playing outside, don't bring him in the moment he is done, either: let him enjoy outdoors for a couple of minutes.

You must remember to take the treats with you! Giving your puppy a treat after you come back inside is too late. Keep up desirable food rewards until you are COMPLETELY done with house training. Your puppy will eliminate quickly and reliably when taken outside if you do so.

2. PREVENT ACCIDENTS INSIDE

This is the tricky one, isn't it? Let me start by saying that the name of the game is NOT waiting until puppy is starting to squat down and then trying to rush him outside. Chances are, you will be too late!

The key is NOT waiting until he may have an accident. How?

A. **Take him outside VERY often.** For example, an eight- or nine-week-old puppy, when awake, should be taken outside every 30 minutes...

...UNLESS you put him in a position to hold it for a little bit longer:

B. **Use the crate to make puppy learn to hold it, and to make it predictable when he will pee.** For example, with an eight-week-old puppy, if you only want to go out once an hour, you could have the puppy play/train etc. for the first half hour (when you know he won't have accidents), then put him into his crate for the second half of the hour. Then take him out, reward success, and start over.

Also **have puppy take all his naps in his crate**, with the door closed, so you don't miss it when he wakes up and will pee.

When the puppy is not sleepy but has to be in the crate, have him chew on his best chew toys, to keep him happy and quiet. You can look for high value chew toys or make a frozen stuffed treat in a Kong toy using his kibble, either just soaked with a little water or mixed with something like pumpkin or yoghurt.

Are there alternatives to the crate for making your puppy hold it? It's not as reliable or convenient as the crate, but having your puppy RIGHT NEXT to you, either tethered to the furniture or to your body, will work as well. Most puppies walk away a few yards from you, or to a corner of the room to eliminate.

.....

As your puppy starts learning the house-training routine, and as his bladder develops, you can readjust your schedule and expect him to hold it increasingly longer. You want to lengthen the time conservatively and gradually. Just because your puppy took a two-hour nap yesterday and didn't go to the bathroom between 9am-12pm, does NOT mean you start taking him out every three hours! He will need to pee much more frequently when he is awake, playing and drinking.

Bottom line: In these initial weeks, your puppy should only have any freedom in the house when you are 95+% sure he will not pee. *You should never get to the point where you must watch your puppy like a hawk: is he going? Is he going now? By that point, you should have either preventatively taken your puppy outside or have put him into the crate to hold it!*

So, go from 30 minutes of freedom (eight-week-old puppy...can be a bit longer for an older pup) to 40 minutes. Then 50 minutes. Then an hour. Your aim is ZERO accidents, not two or three a day! Remember, whenever puppy pees inside, he is learning to pee inside...

How about **nighttime**? If your puppy is relaxed and sleeping, his metabolism should drop significantly, which is great news for you: nighttime schedule is very different from daytime schedule! If you take away your puppy's water a couple of hours before bedtime (recommended) and wake him up for a quick trip outside right before you go to bed, he might be able to last through the night. If he is very young, though, he might need to go out once or twice a night. Make sure your puppy's crate is within earshot of you and if it's clear the puppy needs to go out, take him out. Keep nighttime potty breaks low-key and boring. Your puppy needs to sleep in a crate, with the door closed.

How about when you need to leave the puppy during the day? Before you leave your puppy in a crate, alone, for a longer while, you must make sure he is used to being in the crate and to being separated from you. (If you are doing the house training like I suggested, with naps and quiet chewing times in the crate, this is a given.) If the first time your puppy experiences being in the crate during the daytime is when he is left alone for hours, he may freak out and develop a strong aversion to the crate. In extreme cases, he may get so worked up that he will even pee or poop. However, a relaxed young puppy, already used to the crate, should be fine for 3 to 4 hours in a crate during the daytime. Do not offer water in the crate.

How about pooping? You will learn your puppy's schedule and signs for pooping. Most puppies poop soon after eating. Running around is also a precursor to pooping, so if your puppy is having the zoomies, take him outside. Walk him around outside for a little while if you think it's time for a poop.

Should you budget water? Unless your puppy drinks inordinate amounts of water, you should give him free access to water. Exceptions: do not offer water in the crate and stop giving water two to three hours before bedtime.

What if my puppy pees every 10-15 minutes? Take a urine sample to your vet to check for a possible UTI. If that's not an issue, watch to see if your puppy drinks whole bowlfuls of water; if so, you may have to budget the water for a while (and rethink what foods make him so thirsty!). If your puppy pees when excited, just try to keep greetings more low-key. Puppy will outgrow this phase.

What if your puppy pees inside the crate? As for peeing inside the crate, one possibility is that your crate is so big that your puppy can pee in one end and just walk away from it. In this case, use a crate divider to create a space that's just big enough so that pup can COMFORTABLY stretch out, but no bigger than that. You may also want to remove any absorbent surfaces, such as doggie beds or blankets from the crate for the time being. If none of this helps, you are left with frequent trips outside.

GOOD LUCK!!! Lots of work? Yes! Worth it? Absolutely!!! **Remember, dogs do not house train automatically. If they initially learn to potty inside, they will keep doing that for the rest of their lives.** Believe me, you don't want to deal with pee and poop in your house for the next 15 years! So, keep schlepping outside rain or shine, remember those treats, and have the discipline to put up your puppy in his crate.

Less freedom now leads to more freedom later: a perfectly house-trained dog is allowed everywhere in the house, at grandma's house, in hotels, and in stores!