



## Houstraining Tips

Dogs are creatures of habit. Feeding on a regular schedule will greatly facilitate the houstraining process. (See tips on food also). Sample schedules are offered below. While you are houstraining, you should not leave water or food down for your puppy to drink or eat at will. You should offer it according to the sample schedules until she is houstrained. I also suggest you feed your pup in her crate to help create a positive association with the crate.

First, choose the spot where you want your puppy to eliminate. You should not release her into the back yard and allow her to pick her own spot; you'll be missing an opportunity to catch her doing something right (reward her for eliminating in the spot you prefer). Always have your puppy on a leash when you take her out to eliminate during houstraining.

When it's time to take your pup outside to eliminate, put the leash on her. Go to the door that leads to the elimination area and rattle the knob. Say excitedly, "do you want to go outside?!" (or any phrase of your choosing). When you get any response or a particular response you're looking for (in tricks class you'll learn how to have your dog ring a bell to go out), open the door and proceed directly to the spot you previously chose. Always take the pup to this same spot to eliminate. Do not walk around the yard waiting for her to go. Stand still in your preferred spot until she relieves herself. If after five or ten minutes she does not go, take her back into the house and put her in her crate; try again after 5 or 10 minutes. Alternatively, you can simply bring her in and watch her **carefully**. If she shows signs of having to go, (sniffing the ground, pacing, panting, whining) immediately take her back to her spot outside. With this method, you obviously have to watch your puppy every second until she's ready or you may have a cleaning job ahead of you and be that much further away from a houstrained pup. If you catch your puppy starting to eliminate in the house say "Oops!" loudly, and in a non-threatening manner to startle—but not scare—her to stop the process; immediately take her to the elimination area, picking her up and carrying her if necessary. Anytime your pup eliminates in the house, clean the spot as soon as you can with a deodorizer and odor eliminator. I currently use Nature's Miracle, though there are several other healthy alternatives on the market now. (Note: if you consistently scare your puppy when she attempts to eliminate in the house, she will determine that it is not safe to potty in your presence. This creates an even bigger problem, as she will try to only eliminate when you are *not* around.)

When your pup starts to relieve herself, you may wish to use a phrase such as "hurry up," "go potty," or "outside." This way your dog will learn to associate the phrase with relieving herself, and you can cue her to go at times convenient for you in the future. As soon as she finishes, click and treat her and give plenty of gently, enthusiastic praise. It's a major success when she goes where you want her to!

If this will be one of her exercise periods also, you should bring her back inside, stand at the door again, and then ask her if she wants to "go play?!" Now you can go outside and take her for a walk, play or exercise another way with her. (Retrieving games such as with a Frisbee or Chuckit are great exercise for her that don't wear *you* out! Dogs need exercise. It's one of the best behavior tools you have because **a tired dog is a well-behaved dog.**) This part of the process teaches your pup that "go outside," and eventually whatever signal she uses to tell you that she needs to go, will only work for having to eliminate, and not for when she wants to go play. If she "asks" to go outside and then doesn't eliminate or tries to

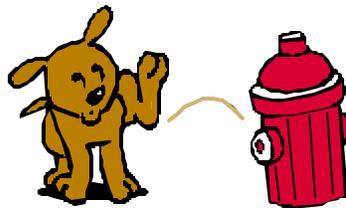
play, you will simply take her back inside and put her in her crate (without a fuss) for 5-10 minutes. Otherwise, you'll find yourself hopping up from your comfortable chair every 10 minutes to take her out to sniff or chase something.

In addition to the suggested elimination schedule below, or as a minimum, always take your pup outside to eliminate within 5-10 minutes after eating, drinking, playing sleeping or waking up. Pick up your pup's water after 7 or 8 p.m. so she doesn't have to go as often in the middle of the night. The first week and sometimes into the 2<sup>nd</sup> week, your pup will have to eliminate in the middle of the night anyway. This is why you should consider keeping her crate in your bedroom—so you can hear her telling you when she needs to go (and to keep her company). If you need to get up in the middle of the night to take her out, put her directly back into the crate after she eliminates. She gets no water, no cuddling and no playtime. If you do these things after you take her out, she'll get in the habit of waking you up to play at times you'd much rather be sleeping!

Here is ***the most important tip*** you will ever hear for housetraining (and destructive chewing): do not let your puppy roam freely throughout the house until she has earned the right to. She should be on a leash that is tied to your belt-loop or a chair that you're sitting in, or in her crate if you are unable to constantly watch her. You can also set up a small x-pen somewhere close to where you will be, and give her Kong toys or Nylabones to keep her busy. You can almost guarantee that if she gets out of sight, she will get into trouble.

Housetraining side note: Naming the elimination process comes in pretty handy at times. My husband and I went to Key West with our 70 lb. Shepherd. If you've never been there, one of the first things you may notice on your first dog walk is the lack of grassy or earthen areas. I finally settled on a 4' x 2' strip of grass next to the road, and said, optimistically, "hurry up!" which is her cue to go. She looked at me, looked at the grassy spot, and looked back at me as if to say, "are you kidding me?" She did eventually get the message, however.

Please be a responsible pet owner. ***Don't forget to scoop your poop!*** The Key West natives are starting to look less lovingly at the dogs populating their town--especially the tourists'-- thanks to the inconsiderate souls who have left smelly piles in the few grassy areas and even on the sidewalks. Right now, Key West is a wonderfully friendly place to pets--pretty much all of the Keys are. Let's don't spoil it!



### **Sample Feeding/Elimination Schedule 1<sup>1</sup>**

- 6:30 a.m. Rise  
Briefly walk your puppy or take her to the designated spot
- 7:00 a.m. Feed puppy and offer a drink of water  
Walk puppy or take her to the designated spot  
Return home and play briefly with pup  
Return puppy to her crate
- Midmorning Walk puppy or take her to the designated spot  
After walk, puppy stays with owner 15 minutes  
Return her to her crate
- 12 noon – Feed puppy second meal and offer water  
1:00 p.m. Walk puppy or take her to the designated spot  
Return and play with her  
Puppy returns to crate
- Mid-afternoon Offer puppy water  
Walk her or take her to the designated spot  
Puppy returns to crate
- 5:00 p.m. Feed your puppy her third meal and offer water  
Walk her  
Allow your puppy to play in the kitchen while you prepar dinner
- 7:00 p.m. Walk puppy briefly or take her to the designated spot  
Return home and play with her  
Puppy returns to crate
- Before bed Walk puppy  
Puppy sleeps in her crate or on a tether (1st night only) in your bedroom

### **Alternative Schedule**

Folks who work away from their homes and cannot come home in the mid-morning or mid-afternoon may require a different type of schedule. At a minimum, your puppy should be able to go outside to eliminate twice in the morning, "lunchtime" or the middle of her day, late afternoon/early evening, evening, and right before bedtime. Removing the mid-morning or mid-afternoon visits causes most puppies to have occasional accidents in their crates until their bladders get stronger (this prolongs the housetraining period, so it's best if she can't mess up her crate). You may wish to find an area in your home that can be gated to restrict your puppy or where you can erect a play pen (available in many on-line catalogs and pet stores). Put the puppy's crate in this area and *tie the door open* (you don't want anything to happen that would scare your puppy and keep her from using her crate in the future.) Put a few newspapers near an outside door, if possible. Don't paper the whole area, though, because you want her to go to the same spot each time if she does have to eliminate. Consider asking a local dog daycare, petsitter or even a neighbor to help with your puppy's schedule. The fewer times she is allowed to eliminate in inappropriate areas, the faster she will be housetrained.

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<sup>1</sup> The Monks of New Skete, *The Art of Raising a Puppy*, copyright 1991.

If your puppy continues to eliminate in unacceptable places in your home, consult your veterinarian to make certain that the problem isn't physiological. If it isn't, you may need to take a closer look at how you administer your housetraining schedule. As with any training or behavior problem, feel free to also call your training professional for help.

### Recommended Reading

*Before You Get Your Puppy* – Ian Dunbar, PhD

*After You Get Your Puppy* – Ian Dunbar, PhD

*Way to Go!* – Patricia McConnell, PhD and Karen London

*Culture Clash* – Jean Donaldson

*Don't Shoot the Dog* – Karen Pryor

*The Power of Positive Training* – Pat Miller

*Positive Perspectives: Love Your Pet, Train Your Pet* – Pat Miller

*The Other End of the Leash* – Patricia McConnell, PhD

*The Whole Dog Journal* – A "Guide to Natural Dog Care and Training"

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See our website for others, and for links directly to the books listed above, as well as for dog daycare referrals.

\* Excerpts taken from the works of Monks of New Skete, *The Art of Raising a Puppy*, 1991 and *Citizen Canine Positive Dog Training*.