Potty Training 101

We've designed this to be a beginner's guide to potty training for your new puppy or adult dog, giving you the knowledge necessary to be successful. You can do this!! Patiance is the key. Mistakes will be made, but every mistake is an opportunity to train and one step closer a potty-trained puppy!

Some puppies are more difficult than others and it's ok! Also, some adult rescue dogs come without potty training and may need a little more patience and time to really get it. A lot depends on what situations they have come from. But the basics are the same!

How Long Can My Puppy Hold It?

As a general rule, puppies can hold urine up to one hour per month old, up to 12 hours max at a year old. There are exceptions to these rules, especially with smaller breed puppies, but it's a good guideline to get started.

Any type of exercise such as play or walks can get things moving a little faster at times. This is good to know when working on potty outside, but also something to keep in mind inside. If you need to motivate potty outdoors, keep your pup moving, If playing indoors, keep an eye on your pup. Remember, moving around gets things moving and accidents may come out of nowhere! Poop can often happen within 15 minutes of eating. Again, any kind of exercise can get this moving too!

Crate Training

Is crate training necessary for potty training? Nope! But it really does make it a whole lot easier. In most cases we recommend it and for the sake of this guide, we're going to go over it. The only times that we don't recommend crate training are when the puppy has severe crate anxiety, but then we'll figure out other options for containment, to prevent accidents.

Why is a crate helpful? The answer is simple. The crate is for times when you can't watch your puppy. When you're home and able to keep an eye on your puppy, you can allow freedom as

much as possible! But keep an eye on your pup. If for any reason you can't keep an eye on your pup, the crate is a great tool. Examples: Doing laundry, making dinner, vacuuming the house, etc. In these situations, you are distracted and accidents could be imminent.

If we work hard on this in the beginning, most dogs can graduate to never needing a crate again!

How do we get the puppy to enjoy being in the crate?

- Make the crate your puppy's favorite place
    - In the beginning, always toss a treat in and give a command such as "In your crate". If your puppy walks in the crate on his/her own, he/she's more likely to accept the crate.
    - Feed your puppy in the crate. Any positive associations are helpful.
    - Put a blanket over the crate. This helps the puppy to feel more comfortable and can also avoid excitement from visual stimulus outside of the crate.

Taking the puppy out of the crate.

Every single time the puppy leaves the crate, immediately go outside to try to potty. No exceptions here. It's the first step in teaching your puppy to go outside for potty and they often need to go after being in the crate for a while.

Never use the crate as a punishment!

It's totally ok to calmly put the puppy in the crate when he/she is acting up and needs a time out. What we don't want is you putting him/her in the crate mad, yelling and scolding. This does no good and can most likely create a fear and anxiety with the crate, setting training back significantly.

How to Handle Potty Training Outside

When you're outside, this is the optimal time to take potty training seriously. This is an opportunity to praise the correct behavior. Always make a big celebration when your pup potties outside! You can't overdo it here. But! Timing is crucial. Wait until your pup has finished and then immediately praise. If you praise before conclusion, you may interrupt the process and he/she may not finish. In some cases, where potty has been a struggle, you can bring treats out as rewards.

What do I do if there's an accident inside?

There are two possible scenarios here. Let's explore both!

1. **You find the accident after it has happened and didn't see it happen**. In this situation there isn't much you can do, other than clean it up and hope to catch it next time. It's still not a bad idea to take the puppy outside to continue making associations between potty and going outside. Scolding after the fact does no good at all because your puppy doesn't realize why he/she is being punished. They can't make that association.
2. **You catch the accident in progress.** This is the ideal scenario as it's the optimal learning opportunity! Startle, but don't scold, to hopefully stop the process and immediately take your pup outside. Keep the process upbeat and positive! Hopefully he/she will finish outside and you can reward with excessive praise and/or treat. Focus on rewarding the correct behavior. This process not only tells your pup that you didn't want him/her to go inside, but that this process should involve going outside and that you are very happy when he/she potties outside! This is where learning can occur!

Do not do these things!

1. **Do not ever rub your dog's nose in it!** For one, it just doesn't work… But it also can create more of a disconnect between you and your pup when it comes to potty. Your pup can become fearful of going potty around you. This can create hidden accidents in the house and can also make it impossible to get him/her to potty on leash in your immediate proximity.
2. **Do not scold and yell at your pup if you catch him/her.** Again, this can create that fear of going potty around you. They can become less likely to let you know if they need to go and that just makes potty training even more difficult.

But my puppy won't go outside and then comes inside an immediately has an accident inside

This is more common than you think. In many cases, this can be remedied with a slight tweak to your potty routine.

So, why does this happen? There can be a few reasons, but the most common reason roots in the fact that your puppy loves being outside. We're often in a rush to get back inside after a puppy goes potty. By rushing in right after potty each time, your pup can create an association between potty and having to go back inside right away. He/she can begin to think, "If I go potty, they're gonna make me go back inside, so I'm not going to potty yet." Eventually you give up and go back inside. That's when your puppy realizes that there's no choice and he/she has to go now, causing an indoor accident

So, how do I fix it? This can be a little bit of a challenge at first, but it's doable. You need to stay out longer, so that you definitely get him/her to potty outside. Remember, keep moving to

encourage potty. Then, reward and stay outside for another 5-10 minutes longer. Do not go right inside. He/she may potty again or just take a little time to sniff around and enjoy the outdoors time. Either scenario is great! You're beginning to break the association with having to go back inside after going potty. If you get him/her to potty again, that's another opportunity to reward the correct behavior!

But I have to work and can't be home during the week to do all of these things

This is very common and totally understandable in the times that we live in. We just need to set your pup up for success!

Remember that your pup can hold it for up to an hour per month old. This is very important when deciding your setup. If you will be gone longer than that window, you'll need to give your pup an outlet, besides the crate for going potty. This is where potty pads, a crate and an indoor exercise pen can set you up for success!

The setup looks like this… Set up your exercise pen with the crate inside on one side and a potty pad on the other. This separation helps for very young puppies who can't hold it very long. Accidents in a crate cause big problems if they get used to doing it. This gives your pup a way to leave the crate to go somewhere else to go potty. They don't generally like to potty where they lay, so it begins to create the idea of going to a dedicated area to go potty.

As your pup gets older, you can phase this out and just rely on the crate, once we're sure that he/she can hold it long enough.

Note: Often an area like a small laundry room can take the place of the exercise pen. Also, we're aware that some puppies like to tear up their potty pads, so in those cases we may need to discuss alternatives.

Check-ins during the day: A professional dog walker, pet sitter or friend can sometimes stop by during the day to let your pup out of the crate to go potty. There are lots of options available now.

Should we use potty pads?

As we discussed above, potty pads can be used as an option for long-term staying in a pen. Aside from that, they can be helpful to give your puppy an outlet for those accidents that come during play or other scenarios that may create an emergency. We recommend keeping the pad near the door(s) that you use to go out and go potty. This can be helpful to start getting your pup used to going to the door when he/she needs to potty. You may also see your pup run to the potty pad and you can distract and say something like "Do you need to go outside and go

potty?" and then immediately take him/her outside, avoiding the accident on the pad and setting up an opportunity to praise for potty outside.

Potty Bells/Buttons

In this guide we won't get into the process of teaching the bells, but we would like to go over how it can be helpful in potty training. There are potty bells and even buttons that your puppy can use to let you know that he/she needs to go outside. The understanding isn't necessarily "I need to go potty", but more like "I want to go outside". It's just another tool to give your puppy a way to let you know that he/she needs to go out and then another opportunity for you to possibly reward for potty outside.

Will a doggie door help with potty training?

Yes and no. It does give your puppy more opportunities to go outside to potty, but here's where it may fall short. First, your puppy won't necessarily learn to let you know that he/she needs to go out. Second and most importantly, you most likely won't be there to reward when your puppy goes potty outdoors.

We recommend that you may want to avoid a dog door early on or don't teach it to your puppy if you already have a dog door for another dog. He/she will most likely figure it out, but take advantage of the opportunity to learn beforehand.

Once your puppy is confirmed to be potty trained, the dog door is great! It can be helpful with future success.

My puppy won't potty on leash and that's our only option

This does happen. Sometimes your pup is just shy or maybe something has happened to make him/her fear being too close to you to go potty. We often recommend a 20-30 fit long leash to give your pup the distance to feel comfortable. There can sometimes be an adjustment period with the leash, but it can be a game changer.

Water Restriction

This can be controversial, but it's totally fine as long as we're planning plenty of time for water and just restricting during specific times.

When can water restriction be helpful? If you're going to be putting your pup in the crate, a bunch of water just prior could cause an accident in the crate. You may want to pick the water up 30 minutes to an hour before extended times in the crate, such as before bed.

In Conclusion

There are lots of helpful tricks and tools that can help with potty training, but we hope this helps to get you started! If you've tried all of these steps and your still struggling, let us know and we can set up a training session to help you put the pieces together and get you in the right direction.