

## POTTY TRAINING YOUR NEW PUP

*Most shelter dogs are not yet accustomed to living in a home, so will need to learn not to go potty indoors. Housetraining a dog starting with a schedule of walking them approximately every 2-3 hours is a practical and effective approach, especially for puppies or newly adopted dogs. Remember that consistency and routine is key, and it may take a few weeks or months, depending on your new pup's age and temperament. Here's a step-by-step guide to get started:*

### **TO START: KEEP IT CONSISTENT**

#### **1. CREATE A DESIGNATED BATHROOM AREA**

Decide on a specific spot in your yard or outside where you want your dog to eliminate and go right to this spot every time you bring your dog out to go to the bathroom. Consistency is key! Some people think bringing their new dog on a long walk will help stimulate them to go. Oftentimes, if a dog is uncomfortable going potty outside, they will hold it during the long walk because they aren't comfortable enough in any of those spaces. This often leads to a dog urinating as soon as they're brought back inside to their safe space, much to their walker's disappointment. By consistently bringing them to the same spot, they will eventually become more familiar and comfortable in that space, and once they begin to potty in that space, it will become the space they prefer to eliminate in.

#### **2. SET A STRICT SCHEDULE**

Begin by taking your dog outside every 2-3 hours. You can set an alarm or a timer to help you remember. Also take them out just after they wake up, after drinking a lot of water, and after their meals. As you get to know them better, you will also learn to recognize signs that they may need to go, such as beginning to sniff around on the ground.

#### **3. ALWAYS SUPERVISE YOUR DOG INDOORS AND WATCH FOR SIGNS**

When your dog is inside between bathroom breaks, keep a close eye on them. Use baby gates or a crate to restrict their access to other parts of the house until they become solid in going potty outside. Dogs prefer not to go to the bathroom in their resting space, so once they begin to eliminate somewhere separate, they will begin to prefer that. Since you will be supervising them, it's important for you to look out for signs that they need to go to the bathroom. Sniffing, circling, and whining are often signs that they need to go outside.

#### **4. KEEP THE NIGHTTIME ROUTINE CONSISTENT TOO!**

At night, continue the schedule. You may increase the length of time between breaks, but expect to take your dog out at least once in the middle of the night, especially if you have a puppy. Crating your dog at night is often helpful to getting them in a nighttime routine and discouraging soiling in between potty breaks. If your dog shows stress in the crate (or their designated space), please see our Crate Training Guide to begin working on it!

## ONCE YOU ARE OUTSIDE WITH YOUR DOG...

### 1. USE A CONSISTENT COMMAND

Use a consistent command like “Go potty” or “Do your business” every time you take your dog out for a bathroom break. Over time, they will learn the meaning of these breaks and this command.

### 2. STAY OUTSIDE UNTIL THEY GO (OR AT LEAST 5 MINUTES)

Be patient. Some dogs may take a little while to go, so give them time. Avoid bringing them back inside until they’ve done their business. If they aren’t going to the bathroom, give them at least 5 minutes outside, then bring them back inside to a supervised area or a crate for 15 minutes to make sure they don’t try to go upon getting back inside, and then try again.

### 3. REWARD THEM AND GIVE (LOTS OF) PRAISE

When your dog eliminates in the designated area, praise them and offer a treat as a reward. Consider using extra yummy treats like cheese, chicken, or hot dog bits, and consider making whatever extra special treat you use for potty be the ONLY time they get this treat. Positive reinforcement is essential. Don’t wait until you get inside to reward them— reward them as soon as they eliminate so that they start to build a direct positive association with going potty outside.

## AS TIME GOES ON

### ADJUST THE SCHEDULE & GRADUALLY GIVE MORE FREEDOM

As your dog becomes more reliable and can hold it for longer, gradually increase the time between bathroom breaks. This adjustment varies from dog to dog. You can also begin to gradually increase their freedom inside the house, one room or section at a time.

## TIPS

### KNOW YOUR DOG’S GENERAL LIMIT!

Healthy, adult dogs can typically hold their bladders for no more than 8-9 hours. If you plan to be away for longer, consider using a dog walker. Puppies can only hold their bladders for shorter durations of time. The typical guideline for this ability is the puppy’s age in months plus 1— so in general, a 2 month old puppy can hold their bladder for a maximum of 3 hours (this doesn’t mean they will, 3 hours is the maximum they can hold it while being very uncomfortable). However, this is just a guideline and ages are often estimated in shelter pets, so they may not be able to hold their bladder to this maximum. Any dog consistently urinating a very frequent amount should be evaluated by a veterinarian for other causes.

### USE AN ENZYMATIC CLEANER FOR ACCIDENTS (& DON’T PUNISH ACCIDENTS!)

Enzymatic-based cleaners are the only cleaners that will completely eliminate your dog’s ability to smell where the mess was made. Regular cleaners like Lysol or Clorox will not do this. If your dog has an accident, do not punish them! If you’re catching the accident after it’s happened, your dog will not connect the punishment to the accident. If you catch them in the moment, punishing them could scare them from eliminating in front of you, making potty training harder in the long run. Instead, interrupt them quickly and immediately take them outside.

**EVERY DOG IS UNIQUE, SO BE PREPARED FOR HOUSTRAINING TO TAKE A FEW WEEKS TO A FEW MONTHS, DEPENDING ON YOUR DOG’S AGE AND TEMPERAMENT.** Work with a professional trainer if you are struggling.