



House training requires consistency, attentiveness, and positive reinforcement! It may take several weeks to houstrain your puppy (or adult dog), depending on several factors. Before you get a puppy, ensure you have time to commit to houstraining. Here are some helpful houstraining tips to ensure success!

Supervise and Reward

- Limit your puppy's roaming space in your home. You should be able to monitor your puppy at all times. This helps you catch "pre-elimination" behaviour, allowing you to rush your puppy outside at the appropriate moment.
- Pre-elimination behaviour includes circling and sniffing the ground. When you observe these signs, immediately bring your puppy to the desired toileting area!
- If your puppy eliminates (urinates or defecates) offer plenty of praise! Give your puppy plenty of treats and positive, excitable verbal praise! Ensure you praise your puppy immediately after they eliminate. If you wait to give a treat until you return inside, your puppy will not learn the appropriate association.
- If you catch your puppy in the act, hustle your puppy to their bathroom spot. It's very important to not scold or punish your puppy.

Establish a Routine

- Take your puppy or dog outside frequently—at least every two hours—and first thing in the morning, immediately after they wake up from a nap, after playing, after eating or drinking, and right before bed. Very young puppies (under 10 weeks of age) will need to eliminate every hour. As they get older, you can gradually extend the duration between bathroom breaks.
- Praise your puppy every time they eliminate outdoors. Consistent positive reinforcement with the desired behaviour (eliminating outside) is the most effective training method for houstraining!
- Pick a convenient bathroom spot near the door, and always take your puppy to that location to eliminate. If your puppy has an accident in the house, take the soiled rags or paper towels and place them in the bathroom spot outside. The smell may help encourage your dog to eliminate outdoors.
- Ensure your puppy has a regular feeding schedule. Feeding your puppy at the same time each day will help your puppy eliminate more consistently. This makes houstraining easier for both of you!

Crate Training

Crate training your puppy is an excellent way to prevent house-soiling and ensure your puppy's safety when you are not home. See our EHS Crate Training resource for detailed steps on how to crate train your puppy. Ensure that you allow your puppy bathroom breaks (at minimum, every two hours) when crate training until they are at least six months of age. Puppies are not capable of holding their bladder for longer periods.

Accidents Happen

Expect your puppy to have a few accidents in the house — it's a normal part of housetraining. Here's what to do when that happens:

- When you catch your puppy in the act of eliminating in the house, immediately take them to their bathroom spot, and verbally praise and reward your puppy when they are done eliminating.
- Do **NOT** punish your puppy for eliminating in the house. Scolding your dog or rubbing their nose in the soiled area will cause your puppy to become fearful. Additionally, they will not associate the behaviour (eliminating inside) with the punishment, which is ineffective training.
- Clean the soiled area with an enzymatic pet cleaner. This is very important because puppies are highly motivated to continue soiling in areas that smell like urine or feces. Do not use any ammonia-based products, such as bleach.
- It's extremely important that you diligently supervise your puppy until they are successfully housetrained. If you allow your puppy to eliminate frequently in the house, they will not learn where the appropriate place is to eliminate, which will prolong the housetraining process.

Remember, puppies do NOT inherently know to eliminate outdoors. It is up to us, as pet guardians, to train and reinforce this behaviour.

Using Pee Pads or Grass Pads

You may wish to start your puppy on pee pads or artificial grass pads, before teaching them to eliminate outdoors. This might be useful for pet guardians who live in apartments, for instance, where the outdoors are not readily accessible for your puppy.

- Follow the same strategies as above, but bring your puppy to the pee pad or grass pad instead of outdoors. Ensure you keep the pad in the same location in your home, so your puppy knows where to go. Change the pee pads or sod pad as needed — puppies may avoid using a pad that is too wet.

- When you begin to transition your puppy's bathroom spot outdoors, it may help to bring a pee or grass pad initially. The scent (and familiarity with the pad) will encourage your dog to eliminate when brought outside. As your puppy begins to eliminate outside consistently, you can gradually phase out the pee or grass pad.

Other House-Soiling Issues

If you've consistently followed housetraining procedures and your puppy or dog continues to eliminate in the house, there may be another reason for their behavior, such as:

- Medical issues house soiling can often be caused by a physical problem such as a urinary tract infection or a parasite infection. Check with your veterinarian to rule out any possibility of disease or illness.
- Excitement Urination - Some dogs, especially young ones, temporarily lose control of their bladders when they become excited. This usually occurs during greetings or playtime.
- Territorial Urine-Marking - some dogs sometimes deposit small amounts of urine or feces to scent-mark their territory.
- Separation Anxiety - dogs who become anxious when they're left alone may house soil due to stress. Usually, there are other symptoms as well, such as destructive behaviors or vocalizations such as barking and whining.
- Fears or Phobias - when dogs become significantly frightened, they may lose control of their bladder and/or bowels.

If you suspect that any of these issues may be occurring, contact your veterinarian and/or a certified dog trainer for assistance.

Did You Know?

You can also ask us behaviour questions by emailing:
askthespecialist@edmontonhumanesociety.com

It takes approximately \$7 million to keep the Edmonton Humane Society operational for one year and 40% of these funds come from generous donations made by supporters like you. Please [Donate](#).