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## House breaking

Lets face it, house breaking is not a pleasant subject. Simply put, you have three choices. You can crate train or you can paper train...or you can use a combination of both.

Crate training is a method where the crate can become a comfortable safe den for the dog and therefore it becomes clear to the dog to eliminate when released outside after being in this "den". There is an added benefit to crate training, in that it can also reduce separation anxiety, barking, increase management within the house and during travel. If there is a down side to this method, here it; when your puppy is between 8 and 16 weeks old, you have the responsibility for each and every elimination your puppy has. And yes, I mean in the middle and throughout the night. You have to get up every 4 hours or so throughout the night to let your dog go to the bathroom. At this age the puppy's bladder cannot hold it any longer. Your alarm will be set to 2200, 0200, and then at 0600. Sounds fun huh? No worries, think of it like this: for only the first two months of this little cute puppies life you will be there for him to help him succeed in not messing up your house and flooring. Truth...if done right, it is possible for a 3 to 4 month old puppy to understand when he needs to go outside to go to the bathroom. However, bladder control varies a bit with the individual dog. Some larger breeds can go 6 hrs. at 13 weeks old. So you will be able to sleep from midnight to 0600 in the morning within a month or so after you get your puppy...considering you got him at 8 weeks old. See, that isn't so bad!

As a result of crate training, your puppy will be housebroken in a shorter period of time. He will find comfort throughout his life by retreating to his personal den. And finally, you will be able to solve other problems, should they arise, with the crate as well.

For those of you who work 8 hours a day and need an alternate solution, there are other options that will also be addressed in this article.

## General guidelines for housebreaking your dog or puppy:

1. Do not punish your dog for accidents. This will lead to other problems. For example, he will learn to never go to the bathroom in front of you. He will learn to sneak off and go in another room.
2. Clean up accidents with an odor-neutralizing product such as "Natures Miracle". Other cleaning products won't eliminate the odor and therefore the puppy will likely go again in the same spot.
3. If you are running into problems with housebreaking or if the dog has coprophagia (eats feces) don't let it see you clean up accidents or tidy up outside.
4. If you are housebreaking an adult or puppy, always take him out immediately after each of the following events: waking up, drinking water, eating, playing, training, and actively sniffing around.
5. When you are moving about the house and you want the puppy with you, keep him on a leash. You can tether him up as long as you are watching at all times. This helps him to learn to hold his bladder a bit longer as time goes by. If you see him sniffing around, take him outside. If he makes a mistake, interrupt him with a toy distraction and get him outside.
6. For every accident, you are set back a few days in your training. You must be more diligent and watch closer to prevent another accident.
7. If you thought your pup was housebroken and then there are a lot of mistakes without explanation, see a veterinarian. There may be a medical problem. ie. Puppies can get bladder infections for example.
8. Try to keep a consistent schedule while housebreaking your pup, even on the weekends. If this isn't possible, make sure there are many opportunities to let the dog out.
9. Take the puppy out the same door and into the same area to go to the bathroom. Don't play and entertain your puppy at this time. When he "goes", praise when he is finished. Then you can play with him.
10. You can extend the time that the puppy can hold his bladder at night by withholding food and water for two to three hours before bedtime and by giving him exercise right before he goes to sleep.

11. If crate training, make sure the crate is the right size. A crate should be 1 ½ times the length of the dog, minus the tail, and tall enough for the dog to stand up. If the crate is too large the puppy may make a mistake in a corner. Also, don't put absorbent material in the crate until you are sure there will be no mistake. By having a crate that is too large, or material that can absorb urine, the puppy can cheat and go to the bathroom without being bothered by it.
12. Never assume the puppy has gone to the bathroom outside. Many owners let the dog out and bring him back in before bedtime thinking he went to the bathroom. This is not always the case. Make sure you see him go.
13. Put going to the bathroom on cue. Do this by saying a word every time the dog goes to the bathroom. He will eventually learn what this means. This will help when you need him to go while at other places.
14. Lastly, consider this: You would not let a two-year old kid roam the house unmonitored would you? This is the biggest trick to house training! You must manage it. The dog is in his crate when you cannot watch him. If he has just relieved himself then he gets free time. This means under your supervision, either by having a leash on him that is hooked to you or the furniture. If tethered to furniture, never leave him unmonitored or hooked up where he can hang himself. This includes the rule of never tethering a dog up with a choker chain. If you break this rule, he can hang himself. If you are lucky and he does not hang himself, I guarantee you will make him aggressive. If the room you are in is small, then you can let him go free. If he can be confined to where you can see him, use baby gates.

## **More tips on crate training**

- Dogs do not like to eliminate where they sleep so make sure the crate is the right size.
- Place the crate in a quiet, but well traveled area. Remember, dogs are pack animals and do not like to be isolated.
- Get the puppy used to the crate by putting food at the back of the crate with the door open. After a few days he will walk right in.
- When initially training him to be in a crate with the door closed, put a loaded chew toy (a Kong filled with peanut butter) in there and ignore the whining. If you open the crate up when he whines on initial training, you have just trained him to whine to get out. Also, teach him to sit before you open the door to let him out. Do this by just waiting until he sits and looks at you as if to say "why aren't you letting me out?" Then open the door.
- If the dog has already been house trained and does not chew, only then can you put bedding in the crate.
- Do not use the crate as punishment.

- Be aware of the dog's age, temperament, training, physical and emotional state before determining the length of time the dog can stay in the crate.
- A rule of thumb when beginning crate training: A puppy should not be in the crate for more than its age in months plus one. Example: an 8 week old pup in a crate for three hours...a 12 week old pup (3 mos. Old) in a crate for four hours. A four month old can be in a crate for five to six hours. And finally, a six month old can be crated for eight hours if all is normal.
- I advise keeping the crate with you in the bedroom at night. If you have other dogs in the house that do not sleep in the bedroom, then keep the crate in with them.
- Proper preparation: i.e. Empty bladder, tired puppy from exercise, cozy in a room with you and, lights out, should be all it takes for him to fall asleep.

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**Please note:** the following excerpts are taken from the Animal Behavior College's theory on housebreaking and have been compiled for this article to help you find more descriptive advice pertaining to your exact situation. It is my goal to look out for the best interest of your dog and I feel that the Animal Behavior College's literature is the best means to achieve this goal.

## **Examples of Real Life Scenarios:**

### **You have a 2 to 4 month old puppy and you are home most of the day:**

- ✧ As soon as you arrive at home with your new puppy or dog, take him out to the place where he will be going to the bathroom regularly.
- ✧ Give him 10 minutes to go, and another 2 to 3 minutes after that. It is common that puppies don't empty their bladder completely during their first attempt. Then stay outside a few minutes afterwards. You don't want them to learn that the outside fun is over when they go to the bathroom. They may avoid going so they cannot miss a single minute of outside fun. Praise him after eliminating.
- ✧ Now the puppy has earned 20 to 30 minutes of free time; either supervised by you or tethered to a piece of furniture. Make sure you monitor him at all times. If you can't do this, put him back in the crate. Never leave a choke chain on the dog even in the crate if you are not monitoring.
- ✧ If he doesn't eliminate when out, put him back in the crate and try again 15 to 30 minutes later.
- ✧ After a few days of success, start using a word as a cue to go to the bathroom.

## **Here is a sample schedule for a normal day at home:**

### 6 a.m. or wake up

Take puppy out instantly. Have leash on. Go out same door. Give 5 min. to go to the bathroom. After he goes, give another 10 minutes. After a few days use a word to cue him. It is the first thing in the morning so we will assume he will go.

### 6:15 to 6:30

Bring puppy inside and give 10 to 30 minutes of free time monitored 100% of the time. When the puppy has some house manners, the owner can drop the leash when they have the puppy confined in the room with them. You can do simple obedience at this time. Reward good behavior and give positive reinforcement (treats too). If you want to play with the puppy, play in one area consistently. Prepare the puppies breakfast

### 6:30 to 6:40

Give the puppy another outside potty break opportunity.

### 6:40 to 6:45

Feed puppy. Ask for a "sit" command and then say "free" and let him run to the feed bowl. Give him 10 to 20 minutes to eat and drink. Do not allow the puppy to wander off. Take him out again when he is finished eating.

### 6:45 to 7:00

If he goes to the bathroom, praise, treat, and bring him inside for 15 to 30 minutes of on-leash free time. Especially after eating, make sure to allow an extra 10 minutes outside if the puppy goes within the first 5 minutes.

### 7:00 to 7:30

During his free time, you may just want the puppy to be allowed to follow you around while on leash to investigate and learn how to be inside. You may want to play more in the backyard or take the puppy for a walk.

### 7:30 to 7:45

Free time is over so you tether the puppy. Puppy lies down to rest and watch you get dressed.

### 7:45 to 8:00

Puppy must be taken outside because he got up from a rest. Puppy potties.

8:00 to 8:30

Free time for the puppy because he went potty. Do some training with the puppy. Puppy drank some water after playing or doing obedience.

8:30 to 8:35

Take puppy out, puppy did not go.

8:35 to 9:35

Puppy in crate with a chew toy...like a Kong.

9:35 to 9:50

Take puppy out. Puppy goes.

9:50 to 11:00

Leave puppy in the back yard if it is fenced and she can play and investigate. Do 5 to 10 minutes of obedience training. Do not assume the puppy went potty while playing and investigating in the backyard. Take the puppy to his potty area for a chance to go before bringing him in. Puppy potties.

11:00 to 11:30

Bring puppy in for monitored time.

11:30 to 11:35

Take puppy out, but did not go potty.

11:35 to 12:00

Bring puppy in and feed and water. This is the second feeding. You can feed in the crate.

12:00 to 12:15

Take puppy out and puppy goes potty.

12:15 to 2:15

Bring puppy in and put in crate. Owner takes a break and runs errands.

2:15 to 2:30

Take puppy out and puppy potties.

2:30 to 3:00

Bring puppy in and puppy gets 30 minutes free monitored time in the house

3:00 to 3:05

Take puppy out. Puppy does not go potty.

3:05 to 4:00

Since puppy did not go to the bathroom, keep him on a leash and tethered to a piece of furniture. Closely observe him!

4:00 to 4:05

Take puppy out. Puppy does not go potty.

4:05 to 4:45

Put puppy in the crate

4:45 to 5:00

Take puppy out and puppy goes potty.

5:00 to 5:30

Give puppy 30 minutes of free time.

5:30 to 5:35

Take puppy out and puppy does not go potty.

5:35 to 6:00

Bring puppy in on lease and feed and water the puppy.

6:00 to 6:05

Take puppy out.

6:05 to 7:30

Put puppy in crate and you eat dinner or take a break.

7:30 to 7:35

Take puppy out and give puppy a last chance to have a drink of water. This will be the last opportunity to drink water for the evening.

7:35 to 10:00

Keep puppy near you and the family while watching TV, or whatever you do in the evening. Do this by tethering him or confining him in a playpen. Give him appropriate chew toys to occupy himself.

10:00 to 10:20

Puppy has a mistake and is caught mid-stream. Owner claps hands and interrupts him and takes him outside to finish going to the bathroom. Play with puppy for 10 minutes so he will be tired for bed. He may want to romp for 10 minutes or so when brought inside. This will make him tired and with an empty bladder he can go to sleep for the night. And so can you!

2:00 ish

Puppy whines and wakes you in the night. Take him outside to potty.

6:00

Puppy wakes you because he needs to potty again. Take him out and start the new day!

Please note:

Obviously this is a routine that will vary with each individual owner and puppy. As the puppy gets closer to the 4 month old , he will be able to be in his crate for 5 hours at a time. At this point you may be able to sleep from midnight to 5:00 in the morning without interruption. Keep in mind that this is also how to housebreak an adult dog. If you adopted a dog, it may not have even been in a home previously, so it is prudent to follow the same training schedule as well. This way, the adult dog is being “managed” and therefore you are setting him up to succeed. Many adopted or rescued dogs find it traumatic to be re-homed and really do not understand where to go to the bathroom. They may not have any idea about rules and boundaries. This routine will help them immensely.

## **Situation 2: You have a 2 to 4 month old puppy and you work but can come home in the middle of the day. The puppy is kept inside:**

Follow everything in Situation 1 except: Let the puppy out to potty right before you leave for work. Since you cannot come back until lunch-time, an 8 week old puppy can not hold himself for 4 hours so you need to provide an area for the puppy to stay in until you return to care for him again in the afternoon. Put the puppy’s crate inside an exercise pen near the door you normally use to take him outside. Be cautious about choosing a pen. You want to consider one that is tall enough that he is unable to climb out and fall over the top of it. In the unlikely event that he does, you may want to have the room puppy proofed just in case he gets loose. Puppy proofing includes making sure that he does not have a way to get to cleaning products, food sources, and poisons. Leave the crate door open and leave a loaded Kong chew toy in there as well. Make sure the Kong toy is a lot larger than the puppy’s mouth. You don’t want the puppy to swallow a toy. You can leave a limited amount of water. Inside the pen area (not inside the crate), you can leave puppy potty pads or newspaper. When the puppy is 3 months old, he can expect to hold himself for 4 hours until you get home to let him out.

When you get home in the afternoon, let him out, feed him and let him out again. Set him up the same way as you did in the morning. Go back to work and resume the schedule outlined in situation one, once you get home in the evening.



**Situation 3: You have a 2 to 4 month old puppy and you can come home in the middle of the day. The puppy is kept outside:**

When you get home for lunch, take the puppy to a specific area of the yard to potty. Make sure he has gone to the bathroom before you bring him in with you for lunch. If he hasn't, just monitor him closely and get him outside if he starts to sniff as if he has to go. If you are leaving a pup outside, make sure there is available shade for him. It would be a good idea to have a crate and a penned area outside or around the crate. This allows the dog or puppy to go in his crate and have room to walk around outside of it without getting into trouble. The crate also protects the puppy from predators, such as hawks. You can buy exercise pens for this purpose at pet stores. I know it is not possible to completely puppy proof a backyard but you can take note of ways your pup can get into trouble and try to minimize the possibilities.

**Situation 4: You have a 2 to 4 month old puppy and you are gone from 8:00 am to 6:00 pm and the puppy is kept in the house:**

This is basically the same as situation 2 except that you will be gone all day. Your puppy may try to hold it but until he is approximately 6 months old, he will need potty pads or newspaper to relieve himself on during the day. Once he can hold it 8 hours, you can start to remove the potty pads or newspaper.

**Situation 5: You have a 2 to 4 month old puppy and you are gone all day and the puppy is kept outside:**

This is the same as Situation 3 except that the puppy will go to the bathroom in the yard, probably not in any specific location.

**Situation 6: You have a 4 to 6 month old puppy and you are home all day:**

You may start to reduce the amount of times you need to take the puppy outside to the bathroom. You can keep a bathroom log to note the frequency and patterns of your dog. While in the house, still keep an eye on the dog. He is still too young to be free roaming. If obvious sniffing starts to occur, distract him with a toy and then take him out. This will help him learn to hold it. He will have to start understanding a bit about self-control. You can begin to teach him to ring a bell hanging on the door to alert you that he needs to go out.

**Situation 7: You have a 4 to 6 month old puppy and you can come home in the middle of the day. The puppy is kept inside:**

As the puppy gets to be closer to 4 months old, you may be able to keep the puppy in the crate or pen for 5 hours; which is when you go to work until you can come home for lunch.

This is considering that the puppy is in a pen with puppy pads, and he has had exercise and a good chew Kong with peanut butter, your chance of a mistake is little to none.

**Situation 8: You have a 4 to 6 month old puppy and you can come home in the middle of the day. The puppy is kept outside:**

When you come home, immediately take the puppy straight out to an area to go to the potty and then play with your puppy for a little while ...or go for a walk.

**Situation 9: You have a 4 to 6 month old puppy and you are gone for the whole work-day and the puppy is kept inside:**

This puppy is going to continue to use the potty pads or paper to go to the bathroom in the exercise pen with the crate by the door. When you get home, let the puppy out to relieve itself out in its area before bringing him back in to have free time with you.

**Situation 10: You have a 4 to 6 month old puppy and you are gone the entire business day and the puppy is kept outside:**

The puppy will go to the bathroom outside where ever he likes. However, when you get home take him to the area *designated* for him to go to the bathroom. If he doesn't go at this time, bring him inside on a leash and watch him closely. Take him outside and try again about 15 minutes later.

**Situation 11: You have a dog between the ages of 6 months old to adult and you are always home:**

At the age of 6 months, you can give your puppy more freedom. However, you still need to take the dog out after he wakes up and after breakfast as well. Most puppies can hold it until noon. It is still a good idea to keep the dog in the same room with you while you are in the house. This way you can still monitor appropriate behavior in the house. You can interrupt any episodes where the puppy sniffs around and appears to have the need to go to the bathroom. The puppy may be fine waiting until noon to go outside again. At the age of 6 months, you can also think about eliminating the noon meal. The puppy is probably OK in the house with you until dinner-time, however, to help ward off separation anxiety, allow the dog to spend time in his crate or an area that he can behave in while you run errands. Continue to follow the guidelines, such as giving the dog plenty of outside opportunities after dinner, before bedtime, and upon waking from a nap, etc. At this time it may be helpful to give the puppy a way to let you know he needs to go out. One way of doing this is to hang

bells on the door-knobs. Encourage the dog to touch the bell with his nose when he needs out. Treat him when he does touch the door-knob.

**Situation 12: You have a dog between the ages of 6 months old to adult, and you can come home in the middle of the day. The dog is kept inside:**

Unless you are sure your dog can be trusted to be alone in the house without a problem, keep him in a crate or the pen area. You can now pick up the potty pads or paper to encourage him to learn to hold it. When you get home, make sure you let him out immediately and that he goes to the bathroom before there is any interaction or play time with you.

**Situation 13: You have a dog between the ages of 6 months old to adult and you can come home in the middle of the day and the dog is kept outside:**

In this situation, it is more difficult to get the dog to consistently eliminate in one particular area. However, you can still take the dog to an area when you get home, and only interact with him when he goes in that particular spot. Treat him when he does go where you desire.

**Situation 14: You have a dog between the ages of 6 months old to adult and you are gone the whole business day and the dog is kept inside:**

Some dogs can hold it for as long as 13 hours. However, if you are going to be gone for a long time and there is no access to the backyard, you will still need to leave potty pads in the confined area that you are keeping the dog. You can eventually leave the dog in the entire room but you will still need pads just in case. The mistake people make, at this point, is how they deal with potty mistakes. If the dog has the whole room to roam and he makes a mistake, it is imperative to go back and confine him again to a smaller, restrictive area for several days to a week. If the dog makes no mistakes in this smaller area, then you can try letting them roam the whole room again. Only allow the dog to keep that freedom as long as there are no accidents.

**Situation 15: You have a dog between the ages of 6 months old to adult and you are gone all day. The dog is kept outside:**

This dog can and will go to the bathroom anywhere he wants to because he has access to the whole yard. However, when you get home, bring him to the elimination area of your choice. Reward him if he goes in this area and bring him inside. If he doesn't go, bring him in and monitor closely. Try again 15 minutes later. Don't allow him to roam or have freedom in the house until you see him eliminate outside.

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## **Conclusion:**

I have given you several situations so that you will have a better understanding about the issue of house training your wonderful new pet. Consistency is a key to success. So remember to give your dog many opportunities to go outside and eliminate. Use the same exits so that the dog becomes familiar with the process. If going outside is not always possible, then provide an area for your dog to “go”. Even if you have to put a patch of sod in a box, in your condo, there is a solution in almost all cases. Follow these solutions and you will be successful. If complications arise, please feel free to contact me at 1-951-768-7374 or [www.thek9gameplan.com](http://www.thek9gameplan.com).