



10 tips for toilet training puppies

By Ness Bird - Nutrition Adviser and RVN CertCFVHNut ©

1. Be prepared

You will need plastic covers, newspaper, training pads (if you choose to use them, some owners prefer not to but this is a matter of personal choice), puppy-safe detergent and rubber gloves.

Have you organised designated areas for toileting?

Ask the breeder about progress with house training before you bring your puppy home, so that you can use a similar schedule and the same commands. This will provide your puppy with continuity and give you and your pup a head start.

Toilet training should start as soon as your puppy joins your household.

2. Be patient and gentle

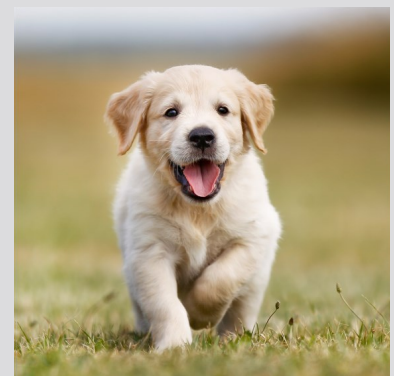
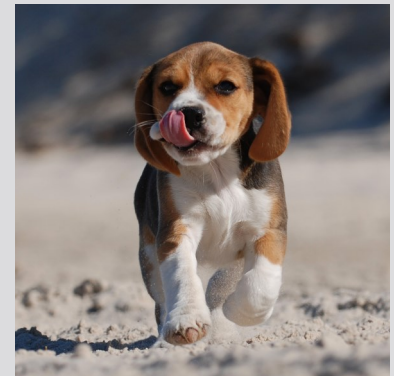
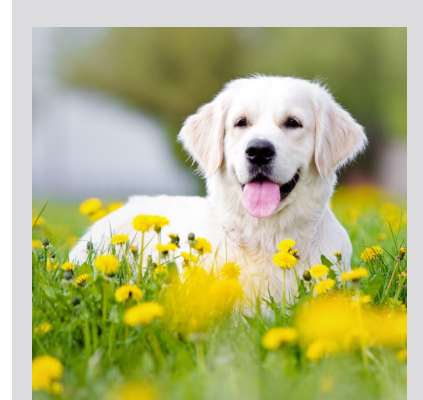
Puppies respond best to kind and calm handling. Never get frustrated or lose your temper when things don't go to plan. There will be accidents, this is perfectly normal.

Very young puppies will not be able to hold themselves over-night, so it's important to provide them with a designated area to toilet. This can be in a crate or puppy pen (if you're using one) but the crate/pen must be large enough to accommodate a sleeping area and drinking station too; or an area in a specific room where your puppy sleeps.

If you seem to be moving backwards, look at what could be done to improve the situation. Are you allowing enough time for training? Are you keeping to a routine? Are you using consistent cue words? Are you rewarding good behaviour? Are you taking your puppy out to the garden often enough?

Punishing a puppy for toileting indoors can make him scared to toilet in front of you, and result in him hiding and toileting in difficult to access areas such as underneath furniture.

Each time you let the puppy out in the garden for toileting and have used your cue word, stay with him but don't interact, just stand still / sit, avoiding contact with the pup and don't speak to him. Keep a watch on when he 'performs' and then give lots of praise or a treat combined with 'good boy'. You can then give him a few minutes of play with his favourite toy before taking him inside again.





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Never just let the puppy outside on his own for toileting as he will be more inclined to want to follow you indoors and take his focus off why he is out there.

3. Try to pre-empt your puppy's needs

Looking at the training scenario from a puppy's point of view and aiming to work around his needs will make training easier. A puppy should be taken to his designated toileting area as soon as he wakes up in the morning (although there will be times when he wakes up first and he may choose to go elsewhere), after each of his meals (usually four meals a day for young pups), after he wakes up from a snooze during the day and before he goes to bed in the evening. He probably won't toilet at every single opportunity, but at least you are giving him the option to do so.

Young puppies can't tell you when they need to toilet, so it's up to you to pre-empt their needs. Eating stimulates the digestive system, so puppies usually will urinate within fifteen minutes of a meal, and defecate within half an hour.

All pups are different though. Some will pick up toilet training quickly and others will take longer. Puppies have a higher metabolic energy requirement, and less efficient bladder and sphincter control than adult dogs, so it is normal for them to pass waste more frequently.

Young pups generally need to urinate every couple of hours so make sure there is a toileting area indoors if you are not able to accommodate this.

4. Use positive reinforcement

Encouraging your puppy to urinate and defecate in the place of your choosing is best accomplished using reward based training. There's no point telling a puppy off if he has an accident. If you're training him properly, it will be just that - an accident, not a deliberate misdemeanour. If you think he's being naughty, he isn't, he just needs a little more encouragement.

Be sure to use cue words just before toileting. Praise comes after the event. Make sure you're not getting complacent and forgetting to reward your puppy when he toilets in the correct place. He needs lots of approval!

Arden Grange Mini Crunchy Bites and Tasty Liver Treat are wholesome, healthy food rewards that are safe to feed to puppies (although as with all additions to the diet, feed only in moderation, and make sure the main food allowance is reduced to allow for the extra calories). Splitting the Crunchy Bites will make a little go a long way, and the Liver Treat is so delicious that only a tiny amount is needed. Praise and petting are also great rewards. A good way to avoid over-feeding is to keep a proportion of the dry puppy food allowance back to use as training treats.

5. Employ good hygiene measures

- It is important to clean up after any accidents indoors quickly and thoroughly.
- Ammonia based detergents are best avoided, as they smell of urine to puppies, and they may like the familiarity of the 'dirty' area and return to it to mess again.
- Safe, enzyme based cleaners are generally ideal as they remove rather than mask odours.
- Avoid strong scented fabric fresheners as they can irritate puppies' sensitive skin and eyes. Good hygiene is also vital to help reduce bacterial growth and the risk of infection.



6. Be consistent

Training is much easier for you puppy if everyone in the household sticks to the same routine and rules.

Puppies can easily become confused, and if one family member is employing a different approach this can cause set-backs.

7. Expect some setbacks

It's not unusual to have accidents, in fact it's more unusual not to!

Factors such as an unavoidable change of routine or a simple case of the pup not being able to wait are the usual reasons for a setback.

Other contributing factors could be curiosity if your pup is so busy exploring the garden that he is distracted from toileting, reaching sexual maturity, as well as getting over-excited, anxious or over-whelmed.

8. Pay attention to your puppy's diet

Lower quality puppy foods are not as calorie dense and involve higher feeding portions than high quality products such as **Arden Grange Puppy Junior** and **Puppy Junior Large Breed**. This can result in increased stool volume and / or increased frequency of passing them.

The digestibility of the ingredients is also very important, as is the suitability of the food for the individual. The better your puppy can digest and assimilate the nutrients in his food, the less waste there will be.

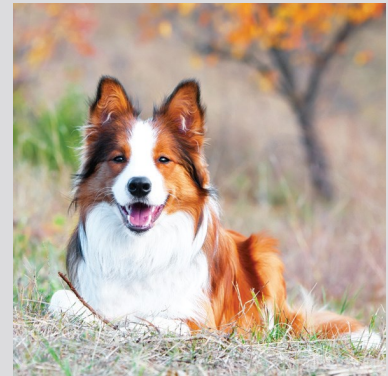
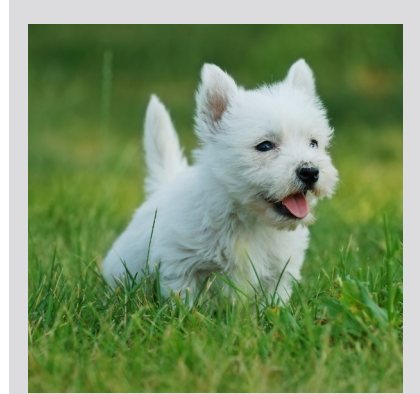
Salty food or treats will make your pup drink more, and increased fluid intake means an increased need to urinate. However, you must never restrict your puppy's access to water.

9. Have a routine but be prepared to change it if it isn't working

Sometimes toilet training fails to go to plan despite our very best efforts. If this happens, the best thing to do is keep a log of your current routine for a couple of days and monitor the timing and circumstances of each accident.

You should then be able to amend the routine to fit in with your puppy's needs. This will raise your awareness of the problem, and not just the fact that there is a problem, but the likely reasons why and how to address them.

Sometimes you need to go back a few steps before you can start moving forward again.





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10. Learning how to toilet on walks

Once your pup has been vaccinated and is old enough to start going for walks he'll often urinate or defecate on his way without too much encouragement. However, some pups may be so interested in the new environment that investigating takes precedence over toileting. This can mean that as soon as they arrive home they'll relieve themselves. Other pups may simply prefer to use their familiar garden toileting area.

To help a puppy learn to toilet on his walk, get up early in the morning and take him out before he's had an opportunity to urinate or defecate in the garden. This may take some time, so allow lots, and this will need to be repeated until he has learned what to do.