



Basic Potty-Training Guide

Potty training refers to the process of teaching a dog to consistently eliminate outdoors. Because dogs in a shelter environment often have variable schedules day-to-day, they may not have gotten consistent opportunities to practice going to the bathroom outdoors. Adopters should plan to allow their newly adopted dogs a consistent potty-training schedule as soon as they get home to set them up for success!

- 1) If your dog is staying in a crate overnight, **start by leashing your dog up as soon as they exit the crate** in the morning and **going straight outside to an appropriate potty spot**. If they are not staying in a crate, simply leash your dog up and take them outside first thing in the morning. Hold the leash and ignore your dog – be a tree, stand neutrally/stationary, and wait. As soon as your dog goes to the bathroom, **YAY!!!** Give them a treat, play with them, praise them, anything that signals they are being strongly rewarded right after they go to the bathroom.

IMPORTANT: Make sure to wait to reward them until the moment **after they finish** going to the bathroom, so that they are not interrupted!

- 2) After your dog goes to the bathroom in the morning, come inside (feel free to keep the leash on while they are indoors), and **supervise them at all times** (when they are not confined to a crate). You may choose to close the door to the room you are in with them so they cannot move to another part of the house alone and potty – it only takes a few seconds unsupervised!
- 3) **Make sure to also give potty breaks after any meals, after water, after nap time, after indoor play, and after crating them for any period**. You may also want to remove access to water about 1 1/2 hours before bed. On these potty breaks, repeat what you do first thing in the morning: go outside on leash, ignore your dog, treat/praise/play when they do go to the bathroom. If they do not go to the bathroom after 5-10 minutes of waiting in the potty spot, bring them back inside. If they enjoy their crate, put them in their crate with some enrichment (a puzzle toy, bully stick, etc.) and give your dog some time to fill up their bladder. Try again after some time in confinement.

Note: It is important to not close your dog in a crate if they are not comfortable in there at this stage. If they are not comfortable in a crate, bring your dog inside and confine them to an area using an ex-pen or supervise them, set them up with a bed and some enrichment, and try again later.

- 4) **Potty accidents indoors should be ignored rather than punished**. Punishing accidents can create fearful associations with you and/or going potty. It can also cause dogs to hide indoor elimination in less-frequented rooms or areas of the home, to eliminate behind furniture, or to eliminate whenever humans are not present. It is then possible that you will have few to no opportunities to reward elimination in the correct place because the dog may no longer eliminate in your presence.
- 5) **All potty accidents should be promptly and properly cleaned with an enzymatic cleaner** to eliminate the enzymes in potty spots that will attract dogs back to the same place. We recommend products like Anti-Icky Poo (available online) or Nature's Miracle (available at most pet supply stores).
- 6) **Additional resources:** A great guide that goes into detail about all things potty training is Patricia McConnell's book "Way to Go: How to House-train a Dog of Any Age". It is a very short book (about 20-25 pages), available on Amazon!

For more information or to request behavior help, please contact our Behavior and Training department at www.eastbayspca.org/behaviorhelp